

The Third Sunday in Lent
23-03-2025
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Isaiah 55: 1-19 Invitation to the Thirsty.

Psalm 63: 1-9 I seek you Lord, because you uphold me.

1 Corinthians 10: 1-13 The failures of others are an example for us.
God will not let us be tested beyond what we can endure.

Luke 13: 1-9 Jesus warns that we need to repent.
Jesus tells the parable of the Fig Tree.

Introduction

Today is the Third Sunday in Lent. Lent is a season in our church calendar when we set aside time to intentionally turn back to God, as we prepare for the celebration of Easter.

As we go through our readings from the Bible, I'd like us to look at the fact that God loves us more than we could ever possibly imagine, the fact that God doesn't force us into anything, and how Christianity is all about saying yes to Jesus so we can be at peace with God.

Life is about more than just the physical

I'd like to begin by focusing in on the reading from Isaiah, and why we might need God in the first place. Firstly, we are reminded by the scriptures today, that we need more than just the physical in our lives.

In Psalm 63:2, we hear "My soul thirsts for you, my flesh longs for you."

In Isaiah 55:2 we hear, "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy?"

Isaiah is really trying to tell the people of Israel, at the time, that there is more to life than just stuff. Stuff is good, we actually need food to live, but we need God more, so that we might know all that life has to offer.

Deep down in each human being I believe there is a longing for more than what we can physically see.

St Augustine in his book "Confessions" put it like this:-

"Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You."

Modernity spurned God, and Humanism became part of how society at large viewed the world. In this postmodern world we now live in there seems to be an awareness creeping back in, that there is a spiritual side to our existence. An example of this comes from a few years ago at a Nursing Home in Townsville that I knew of, which nearly didn't get through its Government Audit for Accreditation, because it needed to improve on how it provided for the Spiritual Care of the residents.

Why do we need God?

So, we have a yearning in our hearts, but why do we need God?

A summary of the Gospel puts it like this:-

As Human Beings we are not perfect. We all, at times, want to do things our own way, and not God's way. As Christians, we call this problem sin. So, sin is not just an issue for those who may have done particularly evil things in their lives, it is an issue for each and every one of us. And it is because of our sin, that we are cut off from God.

God loves us

Despite the fact that we turn away from God, God still loves us, and wants us to know God's peace and presence in our lives. That's why God sent Jesus to die on a cross for us. It is only by accepting what Jesus has done for us in his life, death and resurrection, that we can be reconciled to God. And it is only in being reconciled to God, that we can truly know God's peace in our lives. We may still sin, but we know that Jesus provides the grace necessary for us to be forgiven and to be reconciled to God. From the Cross Jesus looks down and says to each and every one of us – I love you.

We see this clearly in the Gospel reading today. Firstly, we hear how Jesus warns us that we need to repent. And secondly, with the parable of the Fig Tree, Jesus is letting us know he will do all he can for us to love us and bring us around to producing God's fruit in our lives.

I recall seeing some graffiti on the bottom of a toilet door which said:-

No God, No Peace - Know God, Know Peace

This is of course a fun play on words, but a very apt description of what the scriptures have been telling us today.

God loves us, but he won't force us

One of the mysteries of the Christian faith though, is that although God is all powerful, and loves us more than we can begin to imagine, God doesn't force us into anything.

It might not be the most theologically correct way of looking at it, but I like to look at it this way. If when I met Leeza and I decided I loved her, it probably wouldn't have been an ideal way to show my love for her by forcing her to marry me without giving her any choice in the matter. In fact, that would be illegal and considered abusive. Luckily for me, when I did propose, she said yes. Similarly, God doesn't force us to accept God's abundant love for us.

But although God doesn't force us, God doesn't leave us unaided either. Down the ages God has provided a way for people to find their way back to God.

And God often sends people to point us in the right direction. God sent the Prophet Isaiah to the people of Israel. Isaiah 55:6-7 today says:-

⁶ Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; ⁷ let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

And ultimately God sent Jesus, so that we might know the way back to God.

Just as we hear the warnings from Jesus in today's gospel reading, in the letter to the Corinthians today we also have a warning. Paul tells the Corinthians of the example of those who perished in the wilderness, so that they would acknowledge and turn back to God in Jesus, in their lives.

God has given us Jesus, and the ability to persevere in the faith, but the choice is still up to us, to accept and to follow Jesus in our lives.

Christianity – Yes to Jesus

Christianity is about saying yes to Jesus. It's a response we make to God.

It's not primarily about what we do, but about accepting what God has already done for us in Jesus.

It's about accepting God's love, so that we can really experience life as the Creator intended for us, - in relationship with God.

And as we accept Jesus, we will experience God's peace and we should be drawn to living into God's will for our lives.

Conclusion

We are God's people in this place.

Today we will stand and say – "We are the Body of Christ".

How do we take up the invitation Isaiah gives? To experience the delights that God has to offer.

As Christians, we are the ones who know life has so much more to offer than just the physical things we can see or touch or eat.

As we continue our Lenten journey, the challenge before us is, how do we turn back to God and continue to embrace God's love for us in Jesus, so that we can know God's peace in our lives? And how do we then share God's love with those around us? Amen.