

LENT TO HOLY WEEK

Week 1 Sunday 9 March
Week 2 Sunday 16 March
Week 3 Sunday 23 March
Week 4 Sunday 30 March
Week 5 Sunday 6 April
Week 6 Sunday 13 April

Holy week: 14 April to 19 April

We welcome you joining us on the Liturgical journey from Lent to Holy Week. This material reflects the Sunday sermons ensuring the whole church is on the same page and can take the learnings deeper with scripture readings, daily devotions and questions for group discussions. May you draw closer to God whilst learning His truths, find the journey transformative and experience God's love for you in a very deep and real way.

Week 3 Sunday 23 March – Unless you turn to God

Bring God into the meeting with prayer, lighting a candle, listening to a worship song.

Turn to the Living God. (Lori True – A Place at the Table)

<https://youtu.be/gMMmEbzd7Zs>

Read the Bible readings provided:

Liturgical Date: Third Sunday in Lent

First reading: Isaiah 55:1-9

Psalms: Psalm 63:1-8

Second reading: I Corinthians 10:1-13

Gospel: Luke 13:1-9

Luke 13:1-9 The Message

Unless You Turn to God

13 ¹⁻⁵ About that time some people came up and told him about the Galileans Pilate had killed while they were at worship, mixing their blood with the blood of the sacrifices on the altar. Jesus responded, “Do you think those murdered Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans? Not at all. Unless you turn to God, you, too, will die. And those eighteen in Jerusalem the other day, the ones crushed and killed when the Tower of Siloam collapsed and fell on them, do you think they were worse citizens than all other Jerusalemites? Not at all. Unless you turn to God, you, too, will die.” ⁶⁻⁷ Then he told them a story: “A man had an apple tree planted in his front yard. He came to it expecting to find apples, but there weren’t any. He said to his gardener, ‘What’s going on here? For three years now I’ve come to this tree expecting apples and not one apple have I found. Chop it down! Why waste good ground with it any longer?’ ⁸⁻⁹ “The gardener said, ‘Let’s give it another year. I’ll dig around it and fertilize, and maybe it will produce next year; if it doesn’t, then chop it down.’”

A reflection on the Bible reading by: Khanyiso Njwabule (Local Preacher)

As it was in the time of Jesus on earth 2000 years ago, so it is today that even now we think that every time a tragedy befalls others, they must have done some dreadful sinful deed. Yes, in some cases, but not in all the cases just like Job's friend Eliphaz missed the mark by saying to Job "Who, being innocent, has ever perished" (Job 4:7a NIV).

Jesus responds directly to the people in the crowd by asking a rhetorical question (because he sees into their hearts that they have a self-righteous spirit). They think they gave him some scoop of what happened to the Galilean men at the Temple in Jerusalem since they thought those murdered were worse sinners than them. Jesus called out this self-righteous spirit in them to allow them to self-reflect. The point our Lord is making to us, is that to think others are worse sinners than us by looking at the tragedies that befell them is wrong and not the right focus for believers - because the truth of the matter is we do not know this. Its only God that knows and he is the only righteous judge as it declares in the book of James "There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbour?" (James 4:12 NIV)

The tragedies that befall others are not there to fill our self-righteous egos but become a warning from a merciful God for us to focus even more on repenting from our own sins. In the Hebrew language the word repent is "teshuvah" which means "to return" and this means when Jesus is calling us to repent, he is calling us to have a change of hearts and minds by turning away from sin and turning to God.

Repentance is a lifestyle change where one earnestly confesses and mourns their wrongdoings, seeks to make amends for their wrongdoings and is uncomfortable with the feeling of regret & guilt from the sinful acts they have committed. Repentance is not a one-time event for us believers who seek to follow Christ diligently, but a firm and constant way we fight evil that is in us, so that we may continue to grow in our faith in Christ. As one theologian A.W. Pink puts it "The Christian who has stopped repenting has stopped growing."



In the world we live in we are surrounded and bombarded by temptations that seek to pull and turn us away from God (consuming toxic social media content, suggestive billboard and TV advertisements to mention some). It is prudent to take a step back and consider carefully the call coming from Jesus for us to repent. Jesus knows that a life of constant and firm repentance does refresh and strengthen our relationship with Him, so that we are no longer concerned with the fleshly death of our bodies. As St. Paul stated, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21 NIV)

At this point you may wonder that if you diligently live a life of repentance then how do know when there is growth. Well, our Lord who knows all things gives us a parable, that says people who are planted in God's vineyard will be seen by the good fruit they produce in their lives. This good fruit manifests itself as the fruits of the spirit in our lives such as love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control and gentleness (Galatians 5:22-23). This is the evidence of growth in our spiritual lives. John Wesley gives us a clear perspective of how our repentance and Godly fruitfulness are combined when he says, "God does undoubtedly command us both to repent, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance; which if we willingly neglect, we cannot reasonably expect to be justified at all: therefore both repentance, and fruits meet for repentance, are, in some sense, necessary to justification." The mercy of God is also shown in the given parable, by God giving the fruitless fig tree another year to live and therefore it's never too late to start your repentance journey.

Questions for group discussion:

1. Have you ever shown a haughty attitude towards someone who visibly struggles with sin? Please share.
2. What is your understanding of the term repentance?
3. Do you see and repent of your wrongdoings? How do you do this?
4. In doing an honest assessment of your current walk with Christ, do you believe you are bearing good fruit? If yes, give one example of a good fruit produced in the last year.

Daily lectionary readings:

- **Monday, March 24, 2025:** [Psalm 39](#); [Jeremiah 11:1-17](#); [Romans 2:1-11](#);
- **Tuesday, March 25, 2025:** [Annunciation of the Lord](#)
- **Tuesday, March 25, 2025:** [Psalm 39](#); [Ezekiel 17:1-10](#); [Romans 2:12-16](#);
- **Wednesday, March 26, 2025:** [Psalm 39](#); [Numbers 13:17-27](#); [Luke 13:18-21](#);
- **Thursday, March 27, 2025:** [Psalm 32](#); [Joshua 4:1-13](#); [2 Corinthians 4:16-5:5](#);
- **Friday, March 28, 2025:** [Psalm 32](#); [Joshua 4:14-24](#); [2 Corinthians 5:6-15](#);
- **Saturday, March 29, 2025:** [Psalm 32](#); [Exodus 32:7-14](#); [Luke 15:1-10](#);



FAMILY TIME:

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Week 3 - Unless You Turn to God

Scripture: Luke 13:1-9 (The Message)

Key Verse: “If you don’t turn to God, you too will die.” (Luke 13:5)

Introduction

Have you ever seen a plant that stopped growing because it wasn’t cared for? Maybe it needed water or sunlight. In today’s story, Jesus uses a fig tree to teach us that our hearts need to be cared for too. He reminds us to turn back to God before it’s too late.

Bible Story Recap

Some people asked Jesus why bad things happen, wondering if those who suffer are being punished for their sins. Jesus made it clear—everyone needs to turn to God, not just those who go through hard times. To explain this, Jesus told a parable about a fig tree that wasn’t producing fruit. The owner wanted to cut it down, but the gardener asked for more time to care for it. If it still didn’t bear fruit, then it would be removed. Jesus was showing that God is patient, but we must respond to His love and turn back to Him.

Family Discussion Questions

1. **What does it mean to “turn to God”?**
Talk about how we can repent and change our hearts.
2. **Why do you think Jesus used a fig tree to explain this lesson?**
Discuss how just like trees need care, our faith needs to grow too.
3. **What are some ways we can show we are growing in our faith?**
Share ideas like reading the Bible, praying, loving others, and making good choices.

Teen Discussion Questions

1. **Do you think people today believe they have plenty of time to turn to God? Why or why not?**
Reflect on how distractions or excuses keep people from seeking God.
2. **What does the parable say about God’s patience?**
Discuss how God gives us opportunities to change, but we shouldn’t wait forever.
3. **What “fruit” is Jesus looking for in our lives?**
Talk about the evidence of faith, like kindness, self-control, and serving others.

Activity: Growing in Faith

Plant a small seed or care for a plant as a family. Use it as a reminder that just like plants need water and sunlight, our faith needs prayer, Scripture, and love to grow.

Prayer

“Dear Jesus, thank You for giving us time to turn back to You. Help us to grow in faith and live in a way that pleases You. Show us where we need to change and give us the strength to do it. Amen.”