

Worship Material
Repentance and second chances
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 23rd March

Begin with an opening prayer

Creator God, as we gather today,
we know we have often failed to choose well.
Be with us, as we hear again
the stories of your limitless love
and measureless grace.
Amen.

Read Luke 13:1-9

Bible notes

This passage comes just ahead of last week's reading in which Jesus speaks openly about his identity and coming death. Ahead of that exchange, Luke records for us some teaching about the kingdom of God, and the 'narrow door' by which it is entered. That set of teachings is introduced by today's passage. Jesus picks up on some current 'news stories' of the time: people who died in a building collapse and the mistreatment of some pilgrims who have come to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices at the Temple. Pilate was known for his ruthless behaviour and inflammatory treatment of the Jewish people, including massacres, the raiding of the Temple treasury and the bringing to Jerusalem of Roman flags bearing the image of Caesar. The question being addressed, however, is whether these people suffering at the hands of Pilate or in the ruined building were being punished for their sin. Jesus is clear that those who died were not being singled out for judgement. Rather, judgement is coming to all, and the only way to survive this is to 'repent'.

'Repentance' denotes a change of direction. It is an encouragement to stop living as has previously suited and to live in a different way, which brings about different results. The point is to stop being out-of-step with God and, instead, to live in God's way as the people of God. The fig tree parable raises a number of questions (for example, the identities of the vineyard's owner and the gardener, why a fig tree would be planted in a vineyard and why the tree has not previously been dug around and manured). However, it makes the point

that another chance to repent, to change direction, is being given – and that these chances will, at some point, run out.

Prayer

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, entwined as One,
we give you thanks and praise.

Our deepest longings are satisfied in you.

You allow us second chances, never giving up on us.

Repentance changes our life and shapes our future,
one that you tend and nurture, day by day.

You help us endure trials and temptations,
ensuring we are never pushed beyond
our boundary of endurance.

**Father, Son and Holy Spirit, entwined as One,
we give you thanks and praise for satisfying our souls.**

All thanks and praise to you.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Loving God,

thank you for your promise to do something new in each of our lives.

Help us to give people a second chance, as you do for us,
today, in the week ahead and always.

Amen.