

Luke 13:1-9

Repentance and second chances

Jesus tells the parable of a gardener who does everything he can to help a dormant plant become re-energized – any flourishing fruit is the evidence of the gardener’s care.



Research

Look online to find out about prison chaplaincy and how it seeks to offer second chances to those convicted of crimes.

LOOK

Look through your clothes, books, DVDs, toys etc. Is there anything you no longer use? Donate it to a charity shop, to give it a second chance with someone who might make better use of it.

REFLECT

Reflect on the times you have been given a second chance and thank God for those who have given it to you.

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.

First impressions

- How can repotting help a dying plant?
- How does it feel to receive a second chance? How does it feel to give one?
- In what ways can we help to fertilize faith in those who might be struggling?



Pray

Lord Jesus, we are sorry for the things we have done wrong, but grateful for those people who, with kindness and patience, help us change and begin again; who will remind us that you will forgive us when we are sorry and comfort us when we are sad. Amen.



WATCH

Watch the film *The Secret Life of Pets* where Max learns to give Duke a second chance, and Snowball repents from a life of crime when adopted into a family.