

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson  
**20th March 2022 - 3rd Sunday of Lent**

Readings (Year C): 1st: Exodus 3:1-8. 13-15. Psalm: 102. 2nd: 1 Corinthians 10:1-6. 10-12.  
**Gospel:** Luke 13:1-9.

Disasters and tragedies have a way of focusing our minds.

In the ancient world tragedies and disasters were construed as a sign of God's displeasure or anger because of sin. A view that for some was not restricted to the ancient world.

The Aids epidemic that emerged in the 1980's was regarded as a plague that affected only gay people, but led to some very serious attacks on them or dreadful ostracization.

Bible Alive today reminds of 9/11 the collapse of the twin towers in New York, which focused the entire world's attention.

Jesus is told of two terrible recent tragedies: Pilate's bloodshed in the Temple and the collapse of the tower of Siloam.

People were saying that there was a connection between these tragic events and the moral disease in their midst. Had those people done something to deserve this fate?

Were they bad people? No, says Jesus, but unless you repent...

That is always Jesus' message: Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Jesus also tells them their way of thinking presents a false image of God: It leaves no room for God's infinite mercy and compassion; it offers no hope and can lead to despair.

God is not an avenger, nor is God cruel. Jesus does not reject the reality of sin, but he does reject this way of thinking. Jesus turns his attention to those telling these stories.

We are asked what we live by. What meaning does our life have? We have no guarantee that we will reach ripe old age. We can't take it for granted that our lives will work out.

Repent means primarily becoming aware of alienation from God and coming back to him, and living in accordance with God's will and our natures. There is a lesson all can learn from these sad events.

The parable of the fig tree illustrates the loving mercy of God who waits for us to change our minds and hearts in repentance. Time! This is the only way we can 'bear fruit' or do the work that God wants us to do.

The fig tree is a sign of hope, as is the burning bush in our 1<sup>st</sup> reading, of God's loving care and promise of deliverance from suffering and freedom are revealed.