

Third Sunday of Lent, March 23, 2025

## Luke 13:1-9

Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’ “‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’”

Luke 13:6–9 (NRSV)

**L**uke 13:1-9 is Tough Jesus. Hard Truths Jesus. Wake up, McFly! Jesus. Cut it down! Repent or perish!

This is Old-Timey, Jonathan Edwards, stuff. We’re sinners and The Big Guy is Angry Jesus. This isn’t your 21st Century “Oh, we’re worried-about-our-pronouns” faith.

As the Talking Heads said, “This ain’t no party, this ain’t no disco, this ain’t no fooling around!”

Salvation and damnation, neat. No rocks.

In Luke, we fig trees are on the eternal life chopping block. If – if – we bear fruit next year, maybe Heaven awaits. Where’d that “Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven” stuff go?

If we stopped here, stopped with Angry Jesus Having a Bad Day, well, it looks bad for the figs. Most of us aren’t so good at the repentance thing, are we?

Oh, we repent being overweight every year, but most of us can’t shed pounds, much less our sins. Forget that Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods business, eh? Or loving our neighbors as ourselves?

Take the under on those bets.

It’s pretty bleak until you meet the Jesus of Ephesians 2:8: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”

Yes, by all means, give us some good works to show you get it. But never forget: the Almighty knows what He’s working with here: substan-

dard fig trees and He is offering the gift of His unconditional, unmerited – and often unasked for -- salvation.

Thanks be to God!

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**Dear Lord, Help us to be better fig trees. But thanks to God, who has given us the grace we do not merit or earn in our daily figginess. Amen.**

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