

The gospel of Luke is written with a Gentile or Greek-speaking cultured people in mind. In writing the gospel account Luke focuses upon the role and importance of women and the poor, more than the other three gospels, and relates the most parable teachings of Jesus in his story of who Jesus is, how he was and is in the world, and how that changes even us.

Chapters 10 through 13 of Luke contain a plethora of teachings and saying of Jesus. Here at its conclusion, in a story only told by Luke, Jesus insists upon repentance, making a choice, an unavoidable response to the dynamic invitation to live differently, trusting God, renewing a relationship with the Divine and also with one another. Jesus challenges the notion of an cruel, distant God and the Divine purpose in the world as callous and indifferent, reduced to the idea that bad things only happen to bad people. Here Jesus challenges those established religious conceptions, invites to a new spiritual vision and encourages human agency and participation in God's purpose for the world.

*the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices:* We have no historical sources that relate this tragedy. It reads as pilgrims returning from the Temple who share horrific news of worshippers at the Temple, most likely at Passover offering their own animal sacrifices in the outdoor area, having been killed by the occupying forces of Pilate during the worship ritual, possibly out of fear of a violent riot in the capital city (which has repeatedly happened at Passover). This practiced notion of a punishing God is attested to elsewhere in the Bible. <sup>7</sup>Think now, who that was innocent ever perished? Or where were the upright cut off? <sup>8</sup> As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same." Job 4:7-8 and <sup>1</sup>"As [Jesus] walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" John 9:1-2

**WHEN THE TOWER OF SILOAM FELL:** Neither is this event recorded precisely in historical annals. But we know the tower existed in the southeast section of Jerusalem. Here other seemingly innocent bystanders suffer tragedy, challenging the established religious notions that tragedies are the consequences of sin, that bad things only happen to "bad" people.

**unless you repent:** Jesus shifts the focus of the conversation from one about theodicy (the question of divine goodness and the existence of evil) in the third person, about "them"; to one in the second person about "you" and **repentance**. μετάνοια [metanoia]: repentance, conversion a change of mind, a change in direction making a U-turn after realizing you're lost. One can't just talk about it, we all have to sooner or later make a choice, which we do even without making a choice. Jesus asserts that tragedy can befall anyone, that we all are sinners, so then what will we do?; how will we live?

**fig tree ... vineyard:** throughout the Hebrew Scriptures both are used as metaphors and allegories of Israel and the people of God in talking about their relationship with God. Here we can ask is the fig tree a metaphor for Israel, the Church, humanity, us? Or are we the gardener charged with and passionate about caring for the tree? The intercession of the gardener provides a new unexpected opportunity for both life and fruit-production via more time and water and food. Yet there is a time coming, a deadline, a point of no return by – or before – which fruit must be produced (a commonly used allegory of living good lives, ...

## SCRIPTURES FOR SUNDAY 3.12.2017

### Luke 13:1-9, 31-35

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

**12** <sup>54</sup> [Jesus] also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, 'It is going to rain'; and so it happens. <sup>55</sup> And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat'; and it happens. <sup>56</sup> You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"

<sup>57</sup> "And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? <sup>58</sup> Thus, when you go with your accuser before a magistrate, on the way make an effort to settle the case, or you may be dragged before the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer throw you in prison. <sup>59</sup> I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny."

**13** <sup>1</sup> At that very time there were some present who told him about *the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices*. <sup>2</sup> [Jesus] asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? <sup>3</sup> No, I tell you; but **unless you repent**, you will all perish as they did. <sup>4</sup> Or those eighteen who were killed **WHEN THE TOWER OF SILOAM FELL** on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? <sup>5</sup> No, I tell you; but **unless you repent**, you will all perish just as they did."

<sup>6</sup> Then he told this parable: "A man had a **fig tree** planted in his **vineyard**; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. <sup>7</sup> So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' <sup>8</sup> He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. <sup>9</sup> If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

<sup>31</sup> At that very hour some **Pharisees** came and said to him, "Get away from here, for **Herod** wants to kill you." <sup>32</sup> He said to them, "Go and tell that **fox** for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing

connected with God, working for the purposes of God).

**Pharisees:** The spiritual competitors or adversaries of Jesus. They were the populist religious leaders, closest to the people, in encouraging them to radically follow God's Law by practicing the teaching of the Torah. In the gospels they're seen as adversaries of Jesus, but also supremely intrigued by his teaching and example, and here they even act to protect him.

**Herod:** Herod Antipater (born before 20 BC – died after 39 AD), known by the nickname Antipas, was a Roman appointed 1st-century ruler of Galilee and Perea, who bore the title of tetrarch and is referred to as both "Herod the Tetrarch" and "King Herod" in the New Testament although he never held the title of king. He is best known today for accounts in the New Testament of his role in events that led to the executions of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth. He represents a real, dangerous threat to the well-being and life of Jesus: a good reason to flee the area and stop what he's doing.

**fox :** in the ancient world the fox was often contrasted with the lion in terms of metaphors about rulers and power. The lion is strong, unvanquishable, whereas the fox is weaker but more cunning and tricky. Jesus implies that the one who despises him [Herod] is nothing, not to be feared. He implies that the death of the prophet is not one of a victim, but of one who gives himself to a bigger cause.

*I desired ... you were not willing:* in Greek, it's the same verb used, which connotes a stronger contrast between the longings of Jesus' heart and the people's [our own].

**HEN:** this feminine and maternal image is rarely used for God in the Hebrew Scriptures. The hen both attacks and fends off the attacker and protects the life and well-being of her babies. Her presence is equally rooted in power and care, in love and protection.

cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work.<sup>33</sup> Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.'<sup>34</sup> Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have *I desired* to gather your children together as a **HEN** gathers her brood under her wings, and *you were not willing!*<sup>35</sup> See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

### Questions for the practice of Examen & Contemplation

**\*What strikes you in this passage ? How does it interact with what you're living these days, or thinking about?**

**\*How do you wrestle with the question of Theodicy (why bad things happen to good people and why God would let or make that happen)? While not diminishing the importance of such wondering and spiritual questions, how can an obsession with wrestling with unanswerable questions keep us from living here and now?; How have they impeded you from taking a leap of faith into repentance and conversion in your own life? (in the past or today)**

**\*Jesus is presented in a feminine metaphor, but unlike Thelma and Louise he won't drive off abandoning those he cares for. How have you experienced that radical hen-like love? How do you need Jesus to love you in that way today, or open your eyes to such agency-giving love to encourage you and empower you to live fully and abundantly?**