

MARCH 20, 2022  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent  
Luke 13: 1-9

“JESUS’ LOVE IS EVERLASTING.”

“The Mission is a 1986 film which tells the story of a Spanish Jesuit priest who went into the South American jungle to convert the enslaved natives who had been subjected to the cruelty of Portuguese colonials. One of the most telling scenes in this film occurs when Captain Mendoza, who had killed his brother in a fit of rage, is seen climbing a mountain with a backpack on his shoulders as an act of penance for his past sins. The backpack, which contained all the weapons of his former life as a slave merchant, was so heavy that he could not climb higher unless he gave up the backpack. He was relieved of it when one of the natives, whom he had formerly taken into slavery, forgave him and cut the rope of the backpack with a sharp knife. Thus, he saved Mendoza's life, instead of taking vengeance. The backpack represents sin. We cannot carry our ‘backpacks’ of sin with us. Until we repent, are forgiven and let them go, ‘we cannot climb to where God needs us.’ This scene in the movie illustrates today’s readings, which tell us of a merciful God who wants sinners to repent and who uses natural calamities and tragedies in life as loving warnings to awaken His children.”<sup>1</sup>

My dear sisters and brothers, as we know Lenten theme is all about God’s compassion and mercy, faithfulness, and consistency. He loves us no matter what, no matter how we conduct yourself and behave or how heavy our sins are. His love never changes because God is love, His very essence. He cannot not love.

“Today’s readings seem to be saying three things to us: 1. We cannot find our salvation and wholeness as persons without the love and the help of God; 2. God does not punish people because of their bad behaviour; 3. God will not save us against our will

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<sup>1</sup> stories4homilies.blogspot.com

or without our co-operation. It is absolutely true – and we should never have doubts about this – that, if we sin, God continues to love us as he always did and does. But it is also true that, if we sin, we are not loving him. And so, we become separated from him. Love is essentially mutual, it is a two-way process, it is a bonding. Love is not complete until it is reciprocated on both sides. So, God’s love is not perfect, is not fully effective in me until I have opened myself to receive it and to give mine in return. When we sin, God does not stop loving us; it is we who stop loving him. It is we who break the relationship – always.”<sup>2</sup>

When Jesus mentioned two great catastrophes in His time: the murder of pilgrims by Herod who had gone to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices in the temple, mixed their blood with that of the animals offered in sacrifice, and the killing of people beneath the tower at Siloam when it collapsed, what is His message to us as we are experiencing pandemic and conflict in Ukraine and other parts of the world. Are we being punished by our God the same outlook and view of the people in Jesus’ time? “Jesus gives a clear warning: ‘Unless you repent, you will ALL die as they did.’ ‘Repent’ (Greek, metanoia) implies not just regret for the past but a radical conversion and a complete change in our way of life in responding to and opening ourselves to the love of God. What Jesus is saying is: 1. If I am regarded as very ‘successful’ in my life (money, career, status...), it does not at all mean that I am a good person, a person without sin or that God somehow loves me more. Jesus makes that quite clear in the Gospel. 2. If I suffer in my life, it does not at all mean that God does not love me or that I am more sinful than others. In fact, every single experience I have is a sign of God’s love. If I am showered with blessings – spiritual, emotional, or material – they are given that I may share them with others, so that I become a channel of God’s love to others. If I am struck down with disaster, disease, pain or failure, it is again a message for me to seek and find there the presence of a loving God.

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<sup>2</sup> [livingspace.sacredspace.ie](http://livingspace.sacredspace.ie)

Paradoxically, it is often only through such experiences that we can grow and come closer to God and others. Disease and serious illness can draw out of relatives and friends' extraordinary depths of compassion and care. Unhealthy behaviour and material prosperity can often lead to selfishness, individualism, and neglect of others. Where there is love, there is God. Where there is no God, one is not likely to find much real loving."<sup>3</sup> We are all called to look at ourselves this Lenten season as Jesus speaks of the fig tree in today's parable. The tree is alive but no fruit that's why the owner like it to be cut down. The man responsible for it ask for another chance and likewise, this is our chance to grow, cultivate, nurture, and fertilize our own selves so that we can be fruitful. Maybe this is our last chance. God always and everywhere loves us and only fully completed within us when we become sincerely loving and caring persons who love God and others in word and action. We must not be afraid of God; He will never directly punish us or the world. But we really have the option to be closer to Him, experience and reaching out His love and be open to it or go our own way, separate from Him and stumble in the gutters of life. My brothers and sisters, the choice is up to us. What are we waiting for? Act now, act today and continue love God and those around us.

Let this be our prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, may I always recognize your call for repentance everyday and change my heart for you. May I always stay in your love by letting myself instrument of love and care, mercy, and compassion to those around me. May I see every event of my life especially at this moment of pandemic and war, as an invitation and challenge to change and put my trust in your loving hands. Amen."

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<sup>3</sup> ibid