

Sermon Lent 3 2016 PDS

God is always present, when we don't feel it, it's because we are not aware of it. It is awareness we need, presence is guaranteed. God's salvation is freely offered, but we must eagerly receive it, as Isaiah tells us the Lord declares "Come". We hear in that reading from the prophet Isaiah a sort of formula for us: to come, to listen, to seek and to call on God.

Isaiah ended up being unpopular because his message was difficult to hear, he called people to turn from their lives of sin and warned them of God's judgement and punishment. He also however gives people consolation and hope in the latter chapters of the book and the promise of future blessings is given.

In relation to our own lives there are important messages in this book, to return, to repent and to be renewed, then to trust in God's redemption through Christ and to rejoice. And as we heard above to go into God's presence receiving all he has to offer. We do not have to

buy what he has to give us –it is available for all, freely given.

Isaiah reminds us that God's ways are not our ways and Paul also does that but with sterner language. It is easy for us to go along living our lives as we choose, not really harming anyone, but more or less pleasing ourselves, not necessarily challenging ourselves as God will.

Turning to God is the mission of a lifetime, not a one off event, we need to learn to live in his love and his will over and over again. To try to obey him always and not take our spiritual life for granted; Paul writes "So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall." We may all attend church, and eat and drink at the Eucharist, but that does not mean that God is always pleased with us seems to be what Paul is trying to teach his listeners.

So, we have Isaiah talking about God's mercy and Paul talking about repentance, but Isaiah knows we must turn back to the Lord (v7) to receive his mercy and Paul knows that God is

faithful in his desire to hold us as we struggle (v13).

Which leaves us with the Gospel reading from Luke when Jesus tells those questioning him, and perhaps trying to incite him to a violent response, to be aware of their own mortality and warning them to repent before it is too late, it is an urgent matter to get yourself right before God, because one never knows when the end will come, take your chance now to repent Jesus urges them and us. Urgency there and then the second half of the reading which allows time.

The fig tree is given mercy and a second chance, a time of being fed and nurtured to see if can produce fruit. We are being offered that mercy now, a time to turn our lives around, repent and be fed and nurtured so that we can bear fruit for God. What a message for Lent.

God is saying "Come" to us, enjoy a life that you can never imagine, be fed and watered with spiritual things, not the material, impermanent things we can buy. To be surrounded and embedded in him not things of the world, so

that we too can have another chance, to repent and to receive his mercy and all of his gifts that he desires to give us. We need to bear fruit however, not just receive.

God is always with us, we are not always with him, we need to learn to live in his presence, to eagerly receive all he has to offer, and with repentance, turn our back on our old ways, but we cannot do this alone. Living in God's presence means we are living with the Holy Spirit who gives us the power, wisdom and discernment to receive all the nourishment we need, to return to God and to bear fruit that will honour him.