

Almighty God, you know that we have no power within ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

LOOK

Have you ever wondered, when something bad happened to you, if you were being punished?

BOOK

Luke 13:1-9

13At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2He asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? 3No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. 4Or 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? 5No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”

6Then 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. 7So 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?’ 8He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. 9If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

- 1) In the first part of this reading, Jesus responds to news of great tragedy. What is his message? Is he saying that these people suffered because they were sinful?
- 2) In scripture ‘repent’ is most aptly translated to mean a changed mind, a new way of seeing things, to adopt a different perspective. How does that change your reading of this passage?
- 3) Who is the gardener in the second half of the passage? Who is the owner?
- 4) What do these two stories tell us about the nature of God?
- 5) Read Exodus 3:1-15. God speaks to Moses in the burning bush. How does Moses respond? How are these two stories the same? How are they different?

TOOK

- 1) Sometimes God speaks to us clearly, as God did with Moses, with promise and challenge. Sometimes God speaks in the midst of trouble and dryness, with examples like the fig tree. Where are you right now? What is God saying to you? How is God present to you?

- 2) We often wonder why towers fall on us. The people in v. 1 were wondering too. Jesus advises them to repent. How does a change of heart keep us from perishing?
- 3) What has been planted in you that has not yet borne fruit? What would help you be fruitful?
- 4) How does trouble lead us to be more fruitful? Digging around the roots? Some manure? What kind of fruit is Jesus looking for?
- 5) This passage presents a God who is urging repentance and offering a second chance at new growth. How do you hold these two images in tension?