

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Third Sunday in Lent - Year C

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Isaiah 55:1-9

Psalm 63:1-8

I Corinthians 10:1-13

Luke 13:1-9

03/24/2019

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke:

¹At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.²[Jesus] 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.’”

The Gospel of our Lord.

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Come to the Waters!

Good morning! What do you want? That’s the question before us today. As for me? That’s easy, it’s a car. But not just any car, a very specific one. Most car enthusiasts have a laundry list of vehicles they want, and I’m no exception. There’s the mustangs, the old muscle cars, and modern day sports cars. But when asked to narrow it down to just one... it’s got to be something special. My dream car? There’s only one brand... Ferrari, and there’s only one car: the F40.

The Ferrari F40 was built between 1987 and 1992 and was designed to celebrate Ferrari’s 40th anniversary. It’s special because it’s the very last car that Enzo Ferrari, the founder of the company, helped develop before he died. The car wasn’t cheap, starting around \$400,000 in 1987 money, but now is worth well over a million dollars. The car is a rear-wheel drive, mid-engine supercar. It produced 477 horsepower (for comparison, my Mazda 3 only makes about 184.) The car puts that power down to the road with a gated manual transmission, wrestling the 426 ft. lbs. of torque that come from the 2.8 liter twin-turbocharged V-8 engine, screaming to over 7,000 rpm. Fuel economy was never going to be its strong suit, and so it only gets around 9 miles per gallon. The body

of the car was groundbreaking for its use of space age materials. The body was made with Kevlar and carbon fiber, being I believe the first ever road-car to do such a thing. The gorgeous body was painted in one color: Ferrari *Corsa* Red. It's also one of the first production cars to break the 200mph road car barrier and could do the quarter mile in around 12 seconds. It's a masterpiece, and it's what I want.

But the question that Isaiah puts before us today rings loudly in my ear. "*Why do you labor for that which does not satisfy?*" The car might be great, but that won't last forever, and it's nothing compared with what God is offering. In our first reading today we hear from the book of Isaiah. Isaiah was a prophet in the Old Testament who witnessed a variety of challenges that faced God's chosen people. And his writings are some of the most profound and captivating in all of scripture. It's one of my favorite Old Testament books and is usually at the top of most pastors' lists of favorites.

Summarizing the invitation in the beginning of chapter 55 Brevard S. Childs writes that "*Very shortly it becomes fully clear that the goal of the invitation is the obtaining of life... only possible because of... God's compassion.*"¹ So the offer in front of us is nothing more than life itself.

In order to understand this story I think it's helpful to reflect on another biblical story that often left me confused. In the Gospel of John, Jesus begins his ministry at the wedding feast in Cana. In the second chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus performs his first miracle, turning water to wine. For years the story confused me, why save the good wine for last?! I think it's safe to say that most of us understand that you drink the best options at the beginning of the evening, and as our tastes become a little less picky... you

¹Childs, Brevard S. *Isaiah*. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. p. 434.

break out the cheaper stuff, right? So why in the world was the water that was turned to wine being praised by the priest?

Well, the point of the story is that after you think you've experienced what life has to offer, after you have drunk the good wine, after you experience what you think is everything that life has to offer... God is waiting to offer you something even better. The marriage feast doesn't make sense in terms of a wedding because nobody would ever do that, but our life with God is so much more than a wedding feast, and God is offering us everything we could possibly hope for!

What's even more amazing is that in the Isaiah 55 text we see that it won't cost us a thing! Anyone who is thirsty, anyone who is hungry, anyone without money, those who work for a meager existence that doesn't really satisfy, come to the waters! Come to God! Come to the banquet feast that has no end! The sweetest things that life can offer are being given to us freely! All we need to do is listen!

The text wrestles with the inclusion of those who aren't of Jewish decent. God made a promise to David's line, and it's here that the covenant is renewed again, on an international and cosmic scale. We are all welcome. One of the things that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has been saying a lot lately rings very true here: we are all welcome at the table.

So stop and listen. God is offering us something greater than what we could ever get on our own.

Ho, everyone who thirsts,

come to the waters;

and you that have no money,

come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without price.

*2Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?*

*Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.*

*3Incline your ear, and come to me;
listen, so that you may live.*

*I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David.*

*4See, I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander for the peoples.*

*5See, you shall call nations that you do not know,
and nations that do not know you shall run to you,
because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,
for he has glorified you.*

*6Seek the Lord while he may be found,
call upon him while he is near;*

*7let the wicked forsake their way,
and the unrighteous their thoughts;*

*let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

*8For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.*

*9For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Amen.