

**3rd Sunday Lent 24th March Partnership & Repentance**  
**Isaiah 55:1-9 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 Luke 13:1-9**

**Intro:**

One of my favourite ice creams is Phish food. It has caramel and marshmallow swirls within chocolate flavoured ice cream and large chunks of chocolate in the shape of fish swimming around in it :-)

What is there not to like? !!!

Does anyone know who makes it?

Yes - Ben & Jerry... [Pictures](#)

Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield started the ice cream factory in Vermont in 1978

Ben was the creator of the flavours and Jerry the maker of the batches of ice cream.

Clearly a good combination of skills... amazing though because Ben has a condition called anosmia which means that he has VERY poor sense of smell and taste. In compensation he has a very good sense of feel & texture in his mouth. So he invents flavours with HUGE chunks and texture hence the distinctive feature of Ben & Jerry's ice creams. And Jerry sets to and produces them... a great partnership.

Not all flavours are a success and they actually have an ice cream graveyard ([Pictures](#)) where flavours that do not do well get 'sent to'

The partnership has gone well for well over 40 years now with no sign of letting up

Why, you may ask, am I talking about ice cream this morning, especially as we are in the middle of Lent ? !

If only Isaiah said 'Come, buy wine and ice cream without money and without price' then the link would be obvious!

I mention Ben & Jerry's because their's is a successful partnership and I want us to think about partnership this morning.

**Isaiah 55:1-9**

In our Isaiah reading the Lord is calling the people of Judah back to Him. He is warning them about their persistence in seeking after the things that actually do not satisfy, the things that they consume that leave them hungry and thirsty. And offers them instead the chance to come and drink from the waters that God provides.

God is urging the people of Judah to listen to Him, to seek him out, to call upon Him, to return to Him. All of these things need to be intentional; they are actions that need the intent and participation of the people.

God promises in return that He will have mercy on them and abundantly pardon their wicked and selfish ways.

Both the people and God are involved in actions that impact each other; Isaiah is describing a better partnership.

**1 Corinthians 10:1-13**

In our second reading Paul is warning the people of Corinth; the major cosmopolitan city, seaport and major trade centre, about the potential break down in partnership when they get caught up in the idolatry and immorality of the culture around them. He uses the story of the people with Moses as an example.

In vs 7 we read 'Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play' . The word play means to indulge in pagan revelry. Moses' people ate and drank spiritual food and drink but God was displeased with some of them for their indulgent behaviours and struck them down.

They sat down to eat and drink but then rose up and behaved in ways that were immoral and totally against the law God had given them.

Their partnership with God had broken down. They had chosen to follow ways that opposed God's plans and purposes, His ideal partnership.

Paul explains to the people in Corinth that although temptations may be all around them in their city and community, they do not need to succumb to the temptations if they stick with God.

They may feel tested and up against it but if they live in partnership with God, He promises there will always be an alternative way and He will give them the strength to endure the testing.

Are you feeling up against it today... whatever 'it' may be?

The temptations of our culture are huge... many and varied

- Pressures at work to do more, achieve more, work more?

- Pressures through media and advertising to have new or bigger or better, to look different, to wear the right things (Mauve, Lilac, Amethyst are all in colours this season apparently - we are on trend!!)

- Expectations to be independent, self promoting, self improving.....?

Are these temptations, pressures, expectations that we experience?

How do they equate to our partnership with God?

### **Luke 13:1-9**

So what about our gospel reading? What has that go to do with partnership? What relevance does this passage have to us? What is it actually about? Mingling blood and fruitless fig trees?

The parable of the fig tree could mean a few things.... Who does the man, the owner of the vineyard represent? What about the gardener? And the fig tree itself?

There are lots of thoughts and interpretations of this parable as always. But what if the man represents God, the gardener Jesus and the fig tree us?

There is a clear expectancy that the tree should bear fruit.

And Jesus the gardener assures the owner he will do all he can to enable the tree to bear fruit

Another form of partnership between the gardener and the fig tree, between Jesus and us.

What about the start of there reading?

If we look back to chapter 12 of Lukes gospel, Jesus is talking to a large crowd. 12:1 says a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so many that they were trampling on one another! Jesus warns them about all sorts of things throughout that chapter and then we read that some who were there told Jesus about the Galileans who had been killed by Pilates.

These people had probably been on pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem when Pilate had them slaughtered and in so doing their blood mingled with that of the religious sacrifices.

This would have been horrific on 2 levels. Firstly the tragedy of Galileans being killed but also the defilement, the polluting of the Temple with human blood.

They may have been telling Jesus this as a warning; Jesus - do you really want to continue on your way to Jerusalem? There may be worse things to come?

It seems a strange place for this information to be recorded in the gospel but Jesus takes the opportunity, as He so often did, to turn the situation on its head and teach them an important lesson.

In vs 3 & 5 Jesus asks those listening, maybe the thousands, if they think that the Galileans that had been killed were worse sinners? And before they can answer he tells them NO and goes on to tell them of their need to repent otherwise they also will perish. And not once but twice he says 'Do you think they suffered because they were worst sinners...No I tell you; but unless you repent, you will perish as they did'...

Maybe he was warning them to give up their crazy revolutionary rebellion against Rome because if they continued in that way their lives may also come to an abrupt and untimely death. Jesus had a plan for Rome, but it was not one of army rebellion.

But maybe he was also telling them of their general need to repent, to turn around, turn away from their human instincts and trust Jesus for His plan.

At this time there was a great mis-conception that suffering was brought about in direct relationship to the level of sin that you were guilty of.

Jesus refuted this argument and said that it was not about levels of sin. The Galileans that had been slaughtered were not worse sinners.

The crucial bit is that he was teaching that all had to repent - the Greek word metanoia - the complete turning away from former beliefs and actions in faithful acceptance of the proclamation of God's Kingdom and rule.

### **Challenge**

It is so easy for us to look around us and compare our sins with those visible sins of others. So easy for us to say - I haven't killed anyone. I haven't fiddled my tax returns... what ever it is But Jesus taught those listening, and us, that it is not for us to compare sins. It is for us to repent.

Over the last few weeks God has really been challenging me about my need to partner with Him, to really partner with Him. And I am a slow learner!! But I know that for me, and maybe this is true for some of you too, I do not truly partner with God. I believe Him, I even trust Him for many things. But I do not always partner with Him

I don't think that I am like the people that Paul talks about in Corinthians I don't sit down to eat and drink and then get up and behave in ways that are immoral and totally against the law God has given us.

But neither do I, in all things, follow His teaching through Isaiah and intentionally listen to Him, seek Him out, call on Him in all areas of my life Being honest with you, I do not always come to Him and surrender myself and my time to Him. And if we take Jesus words from the gospel reading seriously then to repent means I need to turn away from my former beliefs and actions and faithfully accept God's Kingdom and rule

If I want to live in His Kingdom then I need to accept His rule over ALL areas of my life. Over everything. And I need to seek Him and trust Him with every part of my day, my life, my desires, my thinking, my being.

It is not always easy because some parts of my day I can manage quite well on my own thanks!!!  
Why do I need to bring them to God and ask Him for His help and guidance?

Why? Because if I don't, even the things that are easy and OK and routine for me can become temptations and pressures that lead me into ways of behaving and thinking that are not OK

Why do I need to bring other parts of my life to God? Because on my own I have no idea how to deal with them well and in line with His Kingdom so left to my own devices I come up with ideas and actions that certainly do not bear good healthy fruit for God.

It is hard because 'I can manage' But God does not want us to manage. He wants us to thrive  
It is hard because I don't always see how things might turn out.!!!

But what does God say in Isaiah?

'My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than yours and my thoughts than your thoughts.'

He IS trustworthy. He IS reliable. He DOES know better. HE IS GOD

And He wants us to be in partnership with Him. He loves us and wants to relieve the strain and stress in our lives so that we flourish and bear good fruit for Him and His Kingdom.

But we need to repent and surrender all of our selves and our lives to Him.