

Lent 3 Choice: Repent or Perish! Come all who are thirsty!
Is 55:1-9 1 Cor 10:1-13 Luke 13:1-9

THANK YOU to all who helped with Spring Clean yesterday

PRAY

Choices... I wonder what choices we have each made this week? This morning even?
What time to get up? What to have for breakfast? Whether even to have breakfast!
Walk to church or car? Some people made the choice not to come at all! :-)
What to wear!!

Friday was my day off and I had to make some choices. There were LOTS of things I wanted to do
Gardening... clear some more of the border, cut things back, sweep up leaves..... :-)
Decorate one of the bedrooms
Get the sewing machine out and shorten some curtains and make a blind
Do some housework...
Beautiful sunshine this week... showed up all the mucky windows and dusty surfaces!!
QUICKLY chose not to do the housework!

We all make choices all day long. Big or small
Tea or coffee? Apply for a new job? Have another glass of wine? Or not?
Complain about so and so or grumble about that new...
REPENT OR PERISH ?!
Just thought I would sneak that one in ! :-)
Because, according to the passage we have just hear, that too is a choice we have to make...

Jesus said to those around him, in this mornings reading from Luke that
'unless you repent, you will all perish as they did' !
In fact he said it twice, to make sure he got the point over Vs. 3 & 5

'Do you think that those Galileans were any worse than the others?'
'Do you think that those near the tower were any worse than the rest of those in Jerusalem?'
No! He says. But unless you repent, you will all perish as they did!

In other words he was saying to them you have a **choice. Repent or Perish!**
Repent that is - turn to God make a complete turn around
leave your old beliefs and actions behind and accept Jesus teaching and His ways or Perish

These are tough words from Jesus to those listening to Him that day.
Tough words about a choice they had to make: Repent or Perish
And I think they are equally tough words for us too. A choice that we don't like to think about.
A choice that it can be un popular to talk about, let alone preach on.

These words present a choice, a choice that contains a warning.
But as we can see from all the readings a choice that can also bless us in abundance.
All 3 readings today increase our understanding of the choice we have
Lets look at the Isaiah reading for a minute
God, through the words of the prophet Isaiah, is throwing out an INCREDIBLE invitation
An invitation to abundant life
Look at what he says

Come He who thirsts come to the waters
Buy... without spending any money! ... :-)
Listen
Eat Eat what is good DELIGHT yourselves

Listen to me, listen well: Eat only the best,
fill yourself with only the finest.
Pay attention, come close now,
listen carefully to my life-giving, life-nourishing words.

God is promising GOOD things if only the people would come to Him and
Seek the Lord whilst he may be found

Choice! Be like the wicked and unrighteous or return to the Lord, that he may have
mercy... and abundantly pardon us Vs 7

People hear the words repent or perish and often have very negative reactions
Maybe because we are often presented with choices that emphasise the negative
To a child... put your coat on now or you will have time out on the naughty step!
From the doctors... loose weight or you will suffer more from heart disease...
Maybe we are used to hearing the choice with the 'stick' being emphasised rather than
being motivated by the carrot.
Yes - there are often negative consequences to a choice we are given that we cannot
ignore

BUT let's think about it for a minute about the other way round
To a child... put your coat on so that we can go and play in the park
Loose weight so that you can feel better about yourself and have more energy to...
Repent and turn back to me so that you can live life well and truly satisfied...

God is inviting us here to COME, to turn from all the other stuff and come to him
He's saying stop wasting your money on bread that doesn't feed you
Stop wasting your time doing things that don't satisfy you
There are lots of things that you are doing and eating and thinking about and hoping in
that don't satisfy you no matter how much you give to them
What do we invest in, spend time and or money on to try and find satisfaction?
Instead, God says COME COME COME to the waters
COME and LISTEN to me, return to me and I will give you good things things that will
truly satisfy you.

When we feel thirsty we are already in fact beginning to dehydrate
Dehydration actually starts before we feel that sensation of thirst
The Grand Canyon in America can be incredibly hot. It is desert like conditions
And all along the trail through the canyon there are signs
STOP! DRINK WATER!
You are thirsty whether you realise it or not
In the Grand Canyon the authorities know only too well the risks of dehydration that can
happen quickly and severely in those extreme conditions
And so walkers on the trail are told to drink before they feel thirsty because they NEED to

We may not feel spiritually thirsty but we need to drink

We need to drink from the life giving waters that God offers

Choice: COME to the waters, return to the Lord, and receive His abundant pardon and richest fare **or don't and miss out,** wasting your time and energy on things that never satisfy.

The third choice with a warning is, I think, about complacency

It is EASY to compare ourselves to other people and become complacent

The listeners at the start of Luke 13 seem to be suggesting to Jesus that the other Galileans and the others living in Jerusalem suffered because they were worse sinners or worse offenders.

In the reading from Corinthians Paul is warning the readers not to be complacent because then they will be in danger of falling too (Vs 12)

You see even when we have repented and turned back towards God we can still be tempted, we are not exempt from the risk of falling

But Paul assures us that God, in His love and mercy, always provides a way out so that we do not have to succumb to temptation but can resist it

CHOICE: do we look to God or others as our example because we do not want to become complacent and increase our risk of falling

I don't know about you but if I am honest, I can look about me and think

'Well, I'm not too bad really. I don't do anything as bad as'

Humanly speaking we may be able to justify that really well

We only have to look at the news and see some of the atrocities in our world and we look pretty good in comparison And in that sense we are.

But lets just go back to my windows in the sunshine this week

A bird had OBVIOUSLY flown over my car in the week and left a large white calling card!

It was obvious from inside and outside the car in dull light as well as in the bright sunlight

My lounge windows however looked clean and blemish free on Monday when it was damp and dreary

BUT come Tuesday when the sun was glorious and shining straight through it was plain to see they were not that clean and previously unseen blemishes were glaringly obvious.

Jesus, Light of the World, is purer and brighter than even the sunniest of days.

As we turn to Him and draw closer to Him, even the little specks in our lives show up.

Things that otherwise we might not notice, or choose to ignore

Things that show our lives to be not as good as we might like to think and that we need to repent of before we fall.

So why do we feel uncomfortable with that stark choice that Jesus talked about of Repent or Perish?

Repentance, turning our back on some of the things that attract us, some of the things we spend our time and energy and money on that will never totally satisfy us

And turn ourselves instead to God, returning to Him and His ways is NOT all doom and gloom

In fact it is quite the opposite.

He provides in merciful and abundant ways all that will give us delight and satisfaction

So in the weeks that remain of Lent lets us Seek the Lord while he may be found and call upon him while he is near, let us return to Him and let Him, the gardener tend us by shining His light in to our hearts and minds and then repent of those blemishes so that we can be cleaner and purer for Him and bear much fruit for Him and His Kingdom.