

## Isaiah 55:1-9 Luke 13:1-9 One more chance

A mother and her 16-year-old daughter were returning home from church after listening to a sermon on Lent.

“I still don’t understand what Lent is all about,” said the daughter.

“Look at it this way,” said her mother. “During Lent, you’re supposed to try extra hard to improve your conduct and be a better person. Lent is the time to realize that it’s wise to live every day as if it were your last.”

“But mother,” the daughter replied, “I tried that once and you grounded me!”

The scripture lessons today are wonderfully rich and inspiring, containing promise and hope, caution and warning. Isaiah delivers God’s invitation to the weary, desolate, homesick exiles to come home - all who are thirsty, hungry, tired are to come and receive, without charge, everything they need. Luke echoes this theme, but with a word of warning, and with an invitation.

In Isaiah, God offers an invitation: “Come, everyone who is thirsty - here is water! Come, you that have no money - buy grain and eat! Come! Buy wine and milk - it will cost you nothing!” What a marvellous invitation! How would anyone refuse?

How indeed? In verse 2, we hear the answer, indirectly. God continues to question the exiles, “Why spend money on what does not satisfy? Why spend your wages and still be hungry?” The questions imply that the people are doing precisely this - spending money and wages and coming away empty and dissatisfied, discontented.

Isaiah could be speaking to our generation, couldn’t he - with our consumer mentality and our insatiable hunger to have the newest, biggest, fastest toys in the neighbourhood? We invest a great deal of time, energy, and money in constant pursuit of “the good life.” Then, as we draw near the end of the chase we find ourselves wondering, “is that all there is?” However, we have chased the materialistic dream so long that we do not know any other way to live. We don’t realize that life can be different. Someone said that it reminded them of the opening words to A. A. Milne’s classic Winnie the Pooh. He says, “We first meet the titular bear ‘coming down the stairs, bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head, behind Christopher Robin.’ The latter drags him by one paw and the poor bear’s head thumps on every step. And Milne writes: ‘It is as far as he knows, the only way of coming downstairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another way, if only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it.’”

“If only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it.” How like Winnie the Pooh we are! We race through life, with scarcely enough time to catch our breath, much less think about what we are doing. And for all our successes and despite all the rungs of the ladder we have scaled, there is still, often, within us, a restlessness, a hunger, a deep and abiding longing - for what? Lent is such a good time to stop bumping and think about it. Gathering again to worship is also a good time to stop bumping and think about it all.

Today’s scriptures challenge our understanding, and the world’s, of the good life. They call us to repent, to come home. In Isaiah, God implores his people to “Listen to me and do what I say, and you will enjoy the best food of all.” God invites the Israelites to come home. But



the call to come home doesn't stop here. Isaiah continues the invitation: "Let the wicked leave their way of life and change their way of thinking. Let them turn to the Lord, our God." Jesus would have us lead others to that which satisfies their hunger.

In Luke, Jesus is recorded as saying, "if you do not turn from your sins, you will all die ..."

What is all this about repentance, about turning from our sins? What have we done that is so terrible, so sinful, so wicked, so corrupt? Surely these scriptures are not for us!

There is a story of a farmer who was dying. The vicar called him to repentance. The farmer, puzzled, asked, "Why? What harm have I ever done Him?" The vicar replied, "You have left Him alone - not bothered Him; not gone to Him and besieged Him in prayer; not run to Him as a frightened, pained child runs to a Father."

Indeed, without the God who made us, without continuous communion and fellowship with our Creator, our lives will know a profound sense of disorientation, bewilderment. We will feel lost and empty, hungry and unbearably thirsty.

God invites us, again and again, to come home. God offers us the water that will quench every thirst for meaning and peace that we have ever had. God offers us the bread that will satisfy every hunger. God offers us a loving fellowship, a deep sense that we are finally home, returned to the family of God, where there is joy and there is laughter; where there is honour and there is goodness; where the peace that the world cannot give awaits us. God offers us another chance, even when we've gone far, far astray. Always, God offers us nothing less than life abundant in his company. "Incline your ear, and come to me," he says in our text, "hear, that your soul may live."