

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People
Third Sunday in Lent – Year C

RCL Readings – Isaiah 55:1-9; Psalm 63:1-8; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9

ACNA Readings – Exodus 3:1-15; Psalm 103; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9

Introduction. The season of Lent is much more than simply counting time before Easter. It is a spiritual discipline. Prayer, fasting and a more generous attitude to the poor assist us spiritually to prepare for Holy Week so that we do not shy from the cross of Jesus. Instead, we sit the vigil and welcome the risen Messiah on Resurrection Sunday. Lent is also corporate. That is this season of self-denial is something we walk out together as followers of Jesus the Messiah.

Common Theme. Jesus says, “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46). Faith is not the knowledge that Jesus is real for even the demons acknowledge that Jesus is real. Rather faith is something that should lead the followers of Jesus into action. The readings for this third week of Lent use a common metaphor of eating and drinking the Word of God, but they also have us contemplate the fruit that should be a product of our faith in the risen Lord.

Isaiah 55:1-9. The prophet Isaiah sends out an urgent invitation to “seek the Lord while he may be found”. And the only thing that the people have to do to discover the mercy that is in God is to come to eat and drink. Isaiah reveals how costly and disappointing unbelief or belief in things that are not true really is. It is as if we had spent money on bread which was not real and which cannot provide any sustenance. Faith and trust in other religions likewise often still leaves us empty and unsatisfied. Perhaps Jesus had these verses in mind when he invited the people of Jerusalem, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink’ (John 7:37). While the invitation to a life with God is free, there are some things that remain required of us. First, we have to actually listen carefully and eat what is good. These actions, in response to the call of the Lord, will require some discernment to learn what really is good for us and how to hear the voice of God. Perhaps during this season of Lent we can seek to hear more clearly from the Lord and to discern the good things of God as we prepare for Easter. Faith in God does have another physical response as Isaiah urges the wicked to repent and forsake our ways. This is the fruit that can be seen in those who have indeed answered to call to come and drink.

Psalm 63:1-8. This psalm has a title which implies that David composed it during his time in the wilderness before ascending to the throne of Israel. It begins as a lament in which the author is seeking the Lord in a time of trouble. The desert conditions add clarity to David’s cry that his thirsty soul longs for the good things of God. David recalls the experiences of public worship in the sanctuary, the place of the Ark of the Covenant and the presence of the Lord. David knows that God is real, and in the first first verse he declares him to be his God and that he will seek the Lord. Some translations have “early” and some “earnestly”. The Hebrew verb used is **רָצַח** which has at its root the word **רָצַח** which means *dawn*. David will waste no time in his desire to find God again. He will begin the search at first light, seeking the Lord early with urgency. May we have the same passion for seeking the risen Messiah this Easter as we prepare during Lent.

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People
Third Sunday in Lent – Year C

1 Corinthians 10:1-13. This is a fascinating passage in Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians. The context is a continuation of the discussion in chapters 8 and 9 about what Gentile followers of Jesus should do in regards to meat that has been sacrificed to idols. Recalling that the majority of the Corinthians were Gentiles, Paul connects them with the ancient Israelites of the Hebrew Bible. God's dealings with the Jewish people continue unabridged with the Gentiles now grafted into the commonwealth of Israel. Following the Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites ate and drank the food of heaven. They witnessed the Lord perform many miracles on their behalf, and they were guided in the desert by a cloud. They had the presence of God in their midst. Paul uses a Jewish tradition of the travelling rock, in which the rock which gushed water in the wilderness actually accompanied the Israelites, continually providing fresh living water and sustaining the whole camp. This tradition in Jewish exegesis arises because the rock appears at both the beginning of their wanderings in the desert (Exod 17) and at the end before the entrance into Canaan (Num 20). Paul uses this Hebraic tradition to describe that the ever-present Messiah, who can provide a constant source of living water, is always available for spiritual sustenance. Connecting to our theme of the fruit of faith, Paul reminds the Corinthians that despite "knowing" the reality of God's redemptive activity, the Israelites forsook the Lord and indulged in immorality and pagan worship by building their own gods. Therefore Paul urges us to learn from the Israelite history and "take heed lest we fall". Let us seek diligently this Lent to learn from sacred history and respond with actions of faith.

Luke 13:1-9. The Gospel opens with two tragedies that were known at the time of Jesus (although secular history does not record the events described): the Galilean pilgrims beset by the soldiers of Pilate while bringing their sacrifices to the Jerusalem Temple and the collapse of an unknown tower near the Pool of Siloach (Siloam) that fell from poor construction. Jesus alluded to these events that were well known to his hearers to challenge the common idea that bad things happen because of previous sins. Paradoxically Jesus challenged the audience to repent immediately or else they also would perish in the future. Sin and suffering are connected but not everything should be blamed on sin. The wages of sin are death and thus the actions of sin will lead to nothing positive. However, Jesus reminds us of the truth that bad things can still happen to good people through no fault of their own. Jesus calls his listeners to repent, and we can note in the grammar of Greek text that there are two kinds of repentance and both are essential. In verse 5 repentance is described as a once-for-all kind of repentance, while in verse 3 it is more of a continuing repentance. Repentance is not only a one-off event; it is a lifestyle that we are called into. This lifestyle will bring forth from us the fruit of faith. Jesus brings this teaching to bear in his parable of the barren fig tree. Faith should produce fruit. As James says, faith without deeds is dead (Jas 2:26). To show us a sample of what fruit God is looking for, we have a small list of the fruits of the Spirit by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23. God is very patient in his search for the fruit of faith in us. The parable is still a warning and should not be taken lightly. Judgment is coming, and we are not judged according to faith but by how we put that faith in action. Lent is an opportune season to reflect on the fruit of faith in our own lives. Let us apply the gift of the Holy Spirit to further strive to live out our faith and share the Good News.

ACNA Readings

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People
Third Sunday in Lent – Year C

Exodus 3:1-15. The burning bush is a familiar story to us all. An angel appeared but it was the Lord that spoke. The bush was on fire but not consumed. Moses was in the region of Horeb, which is synonymous with Sinai, although it is not always clear in the text if they are indeed the same mountain. Horeb means *dryness* and reflects again the theology that the Lord is present and comes to us in dry barren times of trial and testing. God promises to redeem the people from Egypt and bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey. Redemption will end in a land of good food and sustenance, although the path will be through the wilderness. Israel had been in bondage to the Egyptians for 400 years, and they had cried out for salvation. But who had they been crying to? They did not have a Bible. They did not have a temple, and they had no priests or prophets while in slavery to tell them who God was. God saved and redeemed his people when they did not really know much about Him. The same theology is reflected in the New Testament, for Messiah died for me while I was a sinner and didn't know him. The wilderness will be a time of preparation and a time to get to know who the Lord is and how to do his will so they could be a light to the nations. Lent is a perfect season of self-discipline to pursue learning the Lord's will and endeavouring to live it out.

Psalms 103. This psalm is simply given the title "a psalm of David" and it comes without an awareness of the context or circumstances of David's life. It is a hymn of praise recalling God's dealings of mercy and righteousness with Israel through Moses. David calls upon his soul to bless the Lord. In Jewish tradition, the soul and the body have a special connection. Genesis 2:7 says that God the creator breathes life into the body of a lifeless Adam and he became a living soul. Prior to the breath of God, the body of Adam was prepared in its entirety yet it was not a living thing. Only after the breath of life did Adam become a *nefesh, a living soul*. Interestingly, Jeremiah 32:41 says that God himself also has a soul. David understood that true worship of God had to come deep within. This is reflected in the words of Jesus when he says we must worship God in spirit and in truth. David reminds us throughout the psalm that the Lord forgives and heals, redeems and satisfies and that he is merciful and gracious. And what should our response be to the steadfast love of the Lord? To keep his covenant and to remember his commands. This then is the fruit of faith, to bless the Lord and to do his will.

About the author. The Rev. Aaron Eime is a deacon at Christ Church Jerusalem and a teacher for CMJ Israel. Aaron studied in the master's program at Hebrew University with a focus on early Jewish and Christian interpretation of the Bible. Aaron is a dedicated Bible teacher exploring the Hebraic roots of the Christian faith. He reads Aramaic and ancient Greek and is fluent in German and Hebrew. He has taught internationally, including in Europe, North America, Hong Kong, and China. He lives in Jerusalem with his wife and three children.