



Parish of Finchampstead and California

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

22 - 27 JUNE 2020

INTRODUCTION

The NT readings for Morning Prayer continue their progress through Luke's Gospel; each day's thought is based mainly on the parts of the readings in bold type.

MONDAY - Luke 13:1-9

¹ At that very time there were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² He asked them, 'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?' ³ **No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did.** ⁴ Or 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? ⁵ **No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.'**

⁶ Then 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. ⁷ So 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?" ⁸ He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

Thought for the day

Jesus uses two gruesome news items to make the point that, when bad things happen to people, that doesn't imply that they deserved it. The random, undeserved impact of Covid-19 reinforces the point and brings it close to home for us. But Jesus warns in verses 3 and 5 that failure to turn back to God (repent) will have terrible consequences. Without playing this down, the parable he then tells reminds us that God, like the gardener, is a God of second chances. But the fig-tree will do well to start fruiting soon.

TUESDAY - Luke 13:10-21

¹⁰ Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. ¹¹ And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. ¹² When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, 'Woman, you are set free from your ailment.' ¹³ When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. ¹⁴ **But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, 'There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day.'** ¹⁵ But the Lord answered him and said, 'You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water?' ¹⁶ And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the

sabbath day?' ¹⁷ When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

¹⁸ He said therefore, 'What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it?

¹⁹ It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.'

²⁰ And again he said, 'To what should I compare the kingdom of God? ²¹ It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.'

Thought for the day

Justice and mercy - a theme Jesus returns to time after time. And here it's not really even justice - merely man-made rules that discriminate against the poor and sick. No wonder this subject usually leads to Jesus identifying hypocrisy at the heart of the problem. In our own time we see some Christians aligning themselves with the status quo of the rich and powerful, others with those who strive for true justice for the marginalised and oppressed. Whose side are we on?

WEDNESDAY - Luke 13:22-35

²² Jesus went through one town and village after another, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. ²³ Someone asked him, 'Lord, will only a few be saved?' He said to them,

²⁴ '**Strive to enter through the narrow door**; for many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able. ²⁵ When once the owner of the house has got up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, "Lord, open to us", then in reply he will say to you, "I do not know where you come from." ²⁶ Then you will begin to say, "We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets." ²⁷ But he will say, "I do not know where you come from; go away from me, all you evildoers." ²⁸ There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrown out. ²⁹ Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ Indeed, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.'

³¹ At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, 'Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.' ³² He said to them, 'Go and tell that fox for me, "Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³ Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem." ³⁴ Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵ See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Thought for the day

The readings throughout this week show Jesus teaching hard lessons. Today's has a personal emphasis for him as he heads towards Jerusalem (v23) and his own destiny (v33-35). He offers his hearers a picture of the narrow door as the way into God's kingdom (v24) - they, and we, will not get in simply by hearing Jesus or about Jesus (v26-27), but only by responding to his teaching.

THURSDAY - Luke 14:1-11

¹ On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely. ² Just then, in front of him, there was a man who had dropsy. ³ And Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees, 'Is it lawful to cure people on the sabbath, or not?' ⁴ But they were silent. So Jesus took him and healed

him, and sent him away. ⁵ Then he said to them, 'If one of you has a child or an ox that has fallen into a well, will you not immediately pull it out on a sabbath day?' ⁶ And they could not reply to this.

⁷ When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honour, he told them a parable. ⁸ 'When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honour, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; ⁹ and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, "Give this person your place", and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, "Friend, move up higher"; then you will be honoured in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. ¹¹ **For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.'**

Thought for the day

After another sabbath healing (see Tuesday's reading), Jesus uses formal meals as the basis for his teaching today and tomorrow. At first sight what he says today seems simply to be aimed at saving his hearers social embarrassment. But Luke tells us this is a parable - so what might its deeper meaning be? The clue is, perhaps, in the final verse which in the form of 'the first shall be last and the last first' we heard as recently as Wednesday (13:30). Christians are called to a life of humility, not of power and position. God will honour us for such faithfulness however much the world runs after celebrities.

FRIDAY - Luke 14:12-24

¹² Jesus said to the one [a leader of the Pharisees] who had invited him, 'When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴ And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.'

¹⁵ One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, 'Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God.' ¹⁶ Then Jesus said to him, 'Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. ¹⁷ At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, "Come; for everything is ready now." ¹⁸ **But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my apologies."** ¹⁹ **Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my apologies."** ²⁰ **Another said, "I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come."** ²¹ So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, "Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame." ²² And the slave said, "Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room." ²³ Then the master said to the slave, "Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. ²⁴ For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.'"

Thought for the day

Another day, another parable, another imagined banquet. The 'someone' (v16), clearly standing for God (v15) issues invitations all round to his feast. But the wealthy (those with possessions - land or oxen) and those whose minds are elsewhere (though it seems a bit harsh on the honeymooners) can't be bothered to go. So the banquet is filled with people right on the margins of society - the homeless, tramps, ragamuffins. Even if they didn't realise they wanted to go, they are there 'entering into the joy of their master' (a phrase borrowed from the parable of the Talents - Matthew 25:14-30). But those with plenty to celebrate just blew it.

SATURDAY - Luke 14:25-34

²⁵ Large crowds were travelling with Jesus; and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ 'Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it?

²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, "This fellow began to build and was not able to finish." ³¹ Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. ³³ **So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.**

³⁴ 'Salt is good; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? ³⁵ It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure heap; they throw it away. Let anyone with ears to hear listen.'

Thought for the day

Following Jesus may involve stark choices. Here he uses exaggerated contrasts to make his point (v26-27). The path of discipleship may well be a costly one, and people need to understand the implications before they start on the road, or risk everything falling apart later (v28-32). Then in verse 33 comes the sting in the tail - along with everything else following Jesus means letting go of our money and possessions. Acts 2:44-45 tells us how the very first Christians put this into practice. Not for them the risk of becoming unsalty salt (v34-35). Are we properly salty salt?