

Sunday, March 23, 2025 – Third Sunday in Lent

First Reading: Isaiah 55:1-9

8 - My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
9 - As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

*A light year is how far light travels in a vacuum in a Julian year – about 6 trillion miles
The nearest known star (other than our own Sun) is 4.22 light years away
The center of our galaxy, the Milky Way, is about 26,000 light years away
The Milky Way is about 100,000 light years across
The distance from the earth to the edge of the visible universe is 45.7 billion light years in any direction*

*That is how far our best thoughts about God on our best days fall short
That is how much bigger God is than our biggest problem, our greatest fear, or our wildest dreams*

Philippians 4: 13 – I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength

Ephesians 3: 20 – Now to Him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine

Psalm: Psalm 63:1-8

1 - O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

*Psalm 42: 1-2 – As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
Song – "As the deer panteth for the water"*

3 - Your steadfast love is better than life itself; my lips shall give you praise.
4 - So will I bless you as long as I live and lift up my hands in your name.

Song – "Thy loving kindness is better than life"

7 - You have been my helper, and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.

When have you experienced being under the shadow of God's wings? What was it like?

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

6 - Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did.
7 - 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." (Exodus 32: 6)
8 - We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.
9 - We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents.

10 - Do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

11 - These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us.

Think of the constant complaining, the golden calf, and the disbelief and fear that kept Israel from entering into the promised land the first time.

How does the Biblical account of Israel in the wilderness provide a warning to you?

13 - No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

When have you wondered whether you are being tested beyond your strength?

How has God provided for you a "way out" – a "way of escape"?

Gospel: Luke 13:1-9

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

This passage is part of a Biblical response to the question, Why do bad things happen?

Sometimes I cause them for myself.

Genesis 3: 17 – God to Adam – "Cursed is the ground because of you."

Sometimes I suffer because of the actions of other people.

Exodus 20: 5 – Visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children to the third and fourth generation.

Sometimes – as in this passage – it is because we live in a fallen world, which is plagued with the effects of sin.

Sometimes they provide an opportunity for God to further reveal His power and glory.

John 9: 2-3 – His disciples asked Him, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither. He was born blind so that God's work might be revealed in him."

John 11: 4-6 – Jesus re Lazarus – "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory." Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was."

Sometimes they are the result of being attacked by Satan.

God to Satan re Job –

Job 1: 12 – "All that he has is in your power; only do not stretch out your hand against him."

Job 2: 6 – "He is in your power; only spare his life."

2 Corinthians 12: 7 – To keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me.