

The Year of the Fig  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent  
Luke 13.1-9

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Repent! You've seen the billboards.

Repent! You've seen the handmade signs stuck in the ground at the edge of cornfields.

Repent! In doing a Google image search, I found all sorts of signs with this command.

Repent! It's not too late.

Repent! The end is near.

Repent! Hell is still hot in case you forgot.

We gather this morning on the third Sunday in Lent and hear Jesus' refrain, Repent!

Both of Jesus' examples in our gospel reading this morning conclude in the same way: unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. He retells stories about people killed in violent ways, reflective of Pilate's brutal practices recorded in history.

Do you think these Galileans suffered because they were worse sinners? Jesus asks.

Do you think the eighteen who died in the tower collapse were worse offenders?

"No, I tell you," Jesus answers his own questions, "Unless you repent, you will all perish as they did."

Paul's message to the Corinthians has the same theme. Repent! Change your ways. "I do not want you to be unaware brothers and sisters," Paul begins. We have examples from our shared faith history of people who needed to repent. Paul points to the idolaters, those who ate and drank and played. He points to the sexually immoral, those who put Christ to the test. In his third example, which might hit a little closer to home, Paul points to those who complained. All of these serve us as examples, Paul writes. "So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall."

Repent! We can deal with this imperative, this command, in a variety of ways. For some people of faith, the act of repentance is seen as a one-time deal. Repent once, get baptized, and never worry about how you act again.

For others repentance is summed up in a list of rules. Repent and sign on the dotted line of the good behavior list. If you follow the list of rules, you are good to go.

"Unless you repent," Jesus says, "you will all perish as they did."

Pastor Brian Stoffregen points out that in our gospel text, "the verb 'to repent' (*metanoeo*) is in the present tense (subjunctive), which implies continual action = 'be repentant' or 'continue to repent' or 'keep on repenting,'" is what Jesus is saying. Repentance "is not a one-shot event that saves one from 'perishing,' but a lifestyle of penitence," Stoffregen concludes.

While we set aside Lent as a season of repentance, the act of repenting is a continual, and very important part of our lives as followers of Christ.

