

Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2025. Lent 3. Benefice Holy Communion, Ampleforth.

As we reflect on our Gospel reading today, we realise that not much seems to have changed since the time of Jesus. We still have tyrants threatening peace around the world, tragedies and meaningless suffering fill our news, and the question is constantly asked “Why?”

For us as believers, we face constant challenges to our beliefs and hopes, our notions of fairness and goodness. It is often hard to hang on in faith and believe that if we just keep praying and behaving rightly, everything will work out. We are reminded of our mortality and that life is fragile, uncertain, and sometimes cruelly short.

Sometimes we just don't want to hear: “God is in control,” “Everything happens for a reason,” “Just have faith,” or any other trite, shallow, and tired platitude that so often gets spoken in these situations because I want to know why these things happen, don't you? I want some explanation and way to make sense of it all. I want my fantasy that if I can just understand it then I can control it. Maybe you do too.

Today Jesus doesn't seem give a solution to our struggle. He doesn't offer an explanation or a way of understanding why Pilate mingled the blood of Galileans with their sacrifices, or why the Tower of Siloam fell.

But perhaps as Christians, we should feel them more acutely and let them call us into a better way of being. But that is hard! If we see that the tyrants, fallen towers, and tragedies intensify the preciousness of life, greater awareness to what we are doing with our lives can follow and we are invited us to consider how we are treating creation and one another. Value and meaning can be heightened as we live in the moment and are reminded that nothing should be wasted or taken for granted. These

situations intensify the urgency and need for us to redeem and reconcile the past and open our eyes and hearts to a new and better way, to the possibility of the impossible, to look at ourselves and our world with new eyes, to see each other in new ways, and to find clarity about what really matters and how we want to live.

So maybe we shouldn't ask the question why because we don't know the answer. 'How' is maybe a better question. How opens the way, why narrows the way. How tends toward the future, why tends toward the past. How is imaginative, why is definitive. How do we find our place amid uncertainty and turmoil? How do we not lose ourselves to the pain and tragedies of our lives and world? How do we keep ourselves in the midst of conflict and violence? How do we sharpen our vision to see more clearly? How do we keep our hearts compassionate and keep hope? How do we live amidst death?

"Repent." That's Jesus' answer to the how question, and he says it twice in today's gospel. "Unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did."

Repent means to turn around and the new questions are; will we turn around to find the courage, hope, and perseverance needed in the moment? Will we turn around to address the needs and interests of others? Will we turn around and break our usual patterns of thinking and acting? Will you turn around to see the opportunity for love, compassion, and forgiveness? Will we turn around from the fear, busyness, and distractions that keep us from living the life that wants to enter the world through us?

What if repentance is reimagining ourselves to be more and our lives to be larger than what has happened to us or what we have done and left undone?

Jesus says all this can happen if we turn around and turn to Him. The words we heard from Psalm 63 give us clear instructions for during Lent, and for life, “When I remember you on my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night For you have been my helper and under the shadow of your wings will I rejoice. My soul clings to you; your right hand hold me fast.”

Thanks be to God, Amen.