

Luke 13:1-9

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

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

Jesus starts of this section asking questions about sinfulness, suffering and death. He points out that sinfulness is not the cause of earthly suffering or death; all will die; nor is sinfulness the cause of suffering, that is a part of life in a fallen world. The Ukrainians are not suffering due to their sinfulness being worse than their neighbours; they suffer due to the actions and decisions of others in a non-God centred world.

Righteousness does not protect from suffering either, rain falls on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Matthew 5:44-45 " But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

Jesus speaks about giving a tree extra time to bear fruit, Jesus offers us time to change, time to repent.

'Repentance' (the Greek word is *metanoia*) is about both a change of mind and a change of action. When we see the world differently, in the light of God's love and Kingdom, we desire to behave in a different way. When we realise how much God loves us we seek to share that love with others. That change of heart and mind brings the opportunity for fulfilment in life through a relationship with God.

We are called to bear fruit; a tree that does not bear fruit is taking up space that could be better utilised and be more productive by another tree. In these days, dare I ask, are we to look at the space our buildings are taking up and ask the question could that space be better utilised?

How could our site be used for more Kingdom purposes and the declaration of the love of God so revealed in Jesus? Perhaps in some cases that could mean a very different use of premises for others a minor adjustment.

Do we need to put some "gospel manure" onto our lives as individuals and communities of faith that we bear a better crop for faith/fruit?