

**3rd Sunday of Lent (Cycle C) Homily  
Saint William, Champion | March 20, 2022  
Ex 3:1-8a, 13-15 | 1 Cor 10:1-6, 10-12 | Lk 13:1-9**

**Deacon Robert Mintus**

For anyone who doesn't know what time of year this is, just turn on your TV and you'll quickly find that it is March Madness time again. Sixty-four lucky basketball teams will have the opportunity to compete on the biggest stage. But the thing I always find most exciting about this tournament is that there are ALWAYS surprises, both good ones and bad ones. Maybe the team you're rooting for has a bad game – or maybe they play a great game as an underdog. Inevitably, we will hear Cinderella stories, but on the other side of the coin, we will also hear about those teams that failed to live up to the great expectations that we had for them.

The fact is that there are very few things in our life that are certain. Sometimes people appear to have a charmed or blessed life, and sometimes people just seem to have a raincloud hanging over their heads. And we wonder why things don't go as we expect. Why do good

things happen to bad people? Or why do bad things happen to good people. There are no easy answers.

In the beginning of our Gospel story today, people are talking about Pilate's recent slaughter in Galilee, as well as those in Siloam who were killed when a tower collapsed. Jesus quickly points out that these people were NOT sinners who were singled out for punishment by God. And immediately after this, He issues a stern challenge: "If you do not repent, you will perish as they did!"

Jesus shares the parable of the fig tree with us to remind us that our lives must bear fruit. Like the gardener, God is patient with us, but ultimately, He is looking for us to respond to His love.

How do we perceive our relationship with God to be? As Americans, there is a dangerous heresy that has crept into our society called the Gospel of Prosperity. The core beliefs of this school of thought are that if our relationship with God is good, then he will reward us by showering His blessings on us. And the converse is also true: if we are suffering, then something must be wrong with our relationship. And along with this

is the idea that if we give to God, He will return our gifts a hundredfold. So we give to God as a sort of investment...making Him into the ultimate financial advisor. But this warped view of God leaves little hope for those who are not financially well off, for those who struggle in life. And it leaves no room for God's generosity.

Today we are reminded of our need to repent. Only three weeks ago, we began our Lent with ashes on our foreheads, calling us to turn our lives back to God. Jesus reminds us to return to God with all our hearts:

He calls us to turn away from the idea of a God who is out to get us by inflicting pain for our sins.

He calls us to turn away from the belief that people's sins and bad decisions cause the tragedy that happens in their lives.

He calls us to turn away from judging others based on where we are in our lives.

He calls us to turn away from the world's ways of repaying evil with evil.

He calls us to turn towards others around us and see them not as competitors in the rat race, but as our brothers and sisters.

He calls us to turn towards those who are in need and share what we have with them.

He calls us to turn towards our generous father, who loves us and forgives us, and is patient with us, a God of second chances.

This weekend we are reminded that in the game of life, we still have time on the clock. Even if we are behind in the game, there is good reason for hope. We look for that one shining moment – not something we will experience on a basketball court – but when we meet God face to face.