

Lenten "Gardening"
Fifth Sunday in Lent
March 18, 2018
The Rev. Deacon Lisa Kirby

This morning I want to talk about three things addressed in our lessons: More about who Jesus is, what's going to happen to him and what his words mean for our lives particularly in this season of Lent.

From the Gospel: "Some of those who went up to worship at the festival were Greeks (read, Gentiles). They came to Philip and said to him "Sir, we wish to see Jesus". Isn't that what we all want?

The last time I was up here we were having scriptures where God tells Jesus who he is, and where God tells the disciples who Jesus is.

Our Epistle speaks to this question as God says "You are my Son, today I have begotten you; as he says also in another place You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. And Jesus cried to his father who could save him from death, but then was obedient."

In Genesis Melchizedek, a priest of the Most High God, brings out bread and wine and blesses Jesus ancestor Abraham. Bread, wine, blessing. Jesus, like Melchizedek Priest of the God Most High.

Secondly in the Epistle we hear that Jesus offered up prayers with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death and his prayers were heard, but he had learned obedience

In several places in scripture we hear Jesus saying things like," Father if it be your will remove this cup from me",. "My God my God why have you forsaken me", " Father save me from this hour," he says today and then says "No, it is for this reason, I have come to this hour, Father, glorify your name"

Jesus, is fully human and shows anxiety and perhaps fear of his impending death, but being fully perfect, he obeys his father in heaven. Obedient unto death.

What does Jesus say about what is to come.

He says his death is essential to his mission. We read " Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it will not bear much fruit." When we plant a garden, we plant a dried up, shall we say, apparently dead seed that when nurtured bears great fruit, or peas, or lima beans or even a tree.

We hear also in I Corinthians *When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.*

So it will be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable. Jesus talks about being “lifted up from this earth”

So Jesus is saying that something, in this case himself, must die in order to bear the fruit of salvation and to glorify God who sent him. He is obedient, for our salvation.

This is Lent, and in our obedience we think about repentance and fasting. On ash Wed. I suggested some things from which Pope Francis suggested we might fast.

Hurting words, , anger, pessimism, complaints, bitterness, selfishness, grudges

Are these, and some other things, seeds in us that need to die that we may be free from them in order to glorify God and serve him? Seeds that need to die so that we can bloom into something more beautiful; closer to what God wants us to be.

What are the seeds that lie within us, that we, unfortunately nurture, that need to fade and perhaps die so that we may live in God’s glory.

I know in me there are still some deep seated resentment about past events and even about myself. Anger about things that might not mean all that much in the grand scheme of things but which continue to keep me stuck.

Who is the person we simply cannot seem to forgive, for whatever reason, that takes up space in our hearts. Things that live in the dark corners of our soul. Thing that we somehow cannot bury, cannot allow to die in us. Do we have some anger at God for taking someone away from us? Do we harbor hate somewhere deep inside us and try to pretty it up and call it “conviction” or “righteous indignation”. Please, I am not suggesting that we not exercise strong convictions in our lives, but that they be fed by love of one thing, not hate of another.

How do we go about making a change, to participate in new birth and growth?

I know that some of you have sought to offer your confession this Lent to one of the members of the clergy and I think that’s a wonderful way to see what the things are in our lives that need to be healed, to die so that something better can take their place. In that Liturgy, there is a place for conversation and guidance and it’s not a bad place to start.

Looking at Pope Francis’s list let’s see what might happen if we fast from the things on the list, and allow them to die.

If we allow hurting words to die, they will bloom as kind words

If we allow anger to die, we will be filled with patience

If we allow pessimism to die, what springs forth will be hope

If our complaints wither and die, we can better find serenity

If we let go of bitterness, let it die out, our hearts can be filled with joy.

If we bury our selfishness we can be compassionate to others

Allow those grudges and resentments to die, and we can be reconciled.

These are things we can do in order to be, in Jesus words, “lifted up from the earth”

It may take more than these last two weeks of Lent, and it won’t happen all at once, but bit by bit our new lives will spring forth like the flowers at Easter and in the Glory of our Risen Lord.