

## **HOMILY for 3<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY of LENT – Year C**

This Sunday's Gospel tells us about a couple of terrible tragedies & the importance of changing our lives before an unexpected end to us. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this brand-new cute story that I'd like to share with you.

A priest & businessman were playing golf. After playing several holes, the businessman's game takes a turn for the worse.

"Damn! I missed!" he swears, as his ball lands in a sand bunker.

The priest is understandably shocked & admonishes the businessman, "Do not wear, my son. You will incur God's wrath."

The next time the businessman fails, however, he exclaims again, "Damn! I missed!"

The priest gets very angry & scolds him severely: "My son, you place yourself in great jeopardy by your words!"

But alas, as the businessman's ball again fails to roll where he wants it to, he yells loudly: "Damn, I missed!"

Suddenly a lightning bolt strikes from the clear sky & reduces the priest to a pile of smoldering ash; & a booming voice from Heaven shouts: "DAMN! I MISSED!"

Anyway, believe it or not, Jesus did not come down to earth to condemn us or bring us God's wrath & divine judgments because of our human sinfulness. He did not come to take revenge on His enemies or children of the darkness either. Rather, he came to save us and intercede for our salvation by offering His own life on the Cross. Unfortunately, our world continues to take revenge on its enemies or people that it does not like. Jesus indeed is a different breed & a great role model for us because He came from a different world. That is why He did a lot of miracles of healing & multiplication of the loaves & fish to show God's love & compassion for our world. He basically wanted to call on our world to come home to God, which is the main message for our Lenten season. This Sunday's Gospel shares with us a parable about that message as following: "...A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard; & he came out looking for fruit on it, but did not find any. He said to the vinedresser, 'Look here! For three years now, I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree & found none. Cut it down. Why should it clutter up the ground?' In answer, the man said, 'Sir, leave it another year while I hoe around it & manure it; then perhaps it will bear fruit. If not, it shall be cut down.'"

Do you know the meaning of that parable? Whom does Jesus address it to? The man who owns the fig tree & vineyard is God the Father. The fig tree is us humans; & the vineyard is the Kingdom of God. The parable is about converting our lives over to God & figuring out new ways to produce for the Kingdom of God. Apparently one day, the owner of the vineyard came out to check on his fig tree for fruits, but he did not find anything. He called his manager to inquire on why the fig tree ended up without any fruit like that. He ordered to cut down that unproductive tree. But, his manager begged him to give it another chance. He even suggested to prune it himself & made his own sacrifices to help turn around the status of the tree. Like that caring & compassionate vinedresser/manager, Jesus had put his own reputation on the line to beg God the Father to give us one more chance. He asked God the Father to let Him work with us & hopefully help turn us around to produce abundantly for the Kingdom of God. In case we have any doubt about Jesus' love & compassion for us, we just need to look up to the Cross & see for ourselves how our Lord would be willing to sacrifice Himself for us. He never

hesitated to stick His neck out for our salvation. We are certainly blessed to have a caring & compassionate manager like Jesus. If our world would have a lot more caring & compassionate managers/leaders like Jesus, we would surely have a lot more loving & prosperous society.

Now we know that Jesus was willing to make personal sacrifices for our salvation. So, how many chances do you think that Jesus would give us to turn our lives around? If Jesus gives us one more chance to do something differently with our lives, what would you change? The beginning of this Sunday's Gospel let us know about a couple of terrible tragedies such as the execution of the Galileans by Pontius Pilate & the tragic collapse of a tower in Siloam on eighteen innocent people to remind us of the importance of changing our lives before our unexpected ends. Meanwhile, today's First Reading shares with us two more stories of life-changing experience such as Moses' witness of a burning bush & his rescue mission of the Israelites from slavery & the Egyptians to help us see how God had continued to work in our daily life & throughout our human history. If we do not realize it & turn our lives around, we might face terrible consequences & regret it later. In fact, today's Second Reading summarizes our current discussion as following, "...God was not pleased with most of them, for they were struck down in the desert. These things happened as an example for us, so that we might not desire evil things as they did. Do not grumble as some of them did, & suffered death by the destroyer. These things happened to them as an example, & they have been written down as a warning to us, upon whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore, whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall." So, St. Paul warns us to change our lives based on the stories of people who have gone before us.

Every time I hear about the chances that God might have given us, I recall one of the college professors who taught me Basic Composition Class which was very challenging for a foreign student like me. We often had to read hundreds of pages & write lengthy term papers. I struggled through that English Class & dreaded writing those papers. I remember that professor once summoned me to his office & let me know that He could not let me have a passing grade on one of his papers. But, he was willing to give me another chance to re-do it & asking me to work with a tutor for that class. Although that was lots of work, I appreciate the second opportunity that the professor gave me & the compassion that he showed me to help me succeed in that class. Looking back on that experience, I'm always thankful for his caring & compassionate heart as I ended up with a B grade for the class. Without that extra chance, I wonder how I would be able to complete that English Class; in fact, I might even flunk it.

My dear brothers & sisters, we humans make lots of mistakes & do lots of hurtful things to God & our neighbors. Worst yet, we often do not live or produce abundantly for the Kingdom of God even though God has blessed us with lots of wonderful things in our lives. This Sunday's Readings want to let us know that God has given us more than one chance to change & come home to Him. He continues to reach out to us with signs & guardian angels to call us to turn our lives around & return to Him. This Lenten season God has sent us God's Son Jesus to intercede for us & sacrifice His own life & reputation for our salvation. Hopefully we would see his care & compassion for us & learn to live & produce abundantly for His Kingdom.