**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**20th March 2022**

**Luke 13:1-9**

**Gathering**

May we find a place of comfort today

Filled with hope

Where light is gentle and fierce

And life is bound up together

And there is a way of being in the world

That speaks of generosity

And encouragement

Sometimes it is hard to see

And we forget to look for it

And our words don’t always believe it

But today

Let us seek it

Turn the world upside down to find it

For it is there

God has made this world for good

Not evil

Let us be the good

In which God has created us

**Introduction**

Hello… I’m Roddy Hamilton the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish and we meet again… on the journey through lent… and thank you for the invitation to join you…

I’m sure we are all tired of being anxious and stressed… tired of so much live bad news… Are we allowed to switch that off for a short time… not to forget anyone in Ukraine… just so we can find solid ground again and then hold them once more…

Today can we turn ourselves towards hope… turn things upside down if necessary to find it… believe in it… trust it… even in the darkness of it all… We need such hope for the sake of us all… Let us as a community pursue it… find it… grasp it… and never let it go…

**A moment to pause**

Let us bring here

All that is heavy

And lay it down

Let us bring here

All that is tarnished and broken

And lay it here before the one of love

Let us bring here

Hurts, worries, anxieties

That in this place they may cease

Let us bring here

That which overwhelms us

That fogs our brains

That makes us feel helpless

And makes us wonder about the future

And lay them in this place shaped by peace

Let us bring here

All we have done that has hurt

The silences and the words

And lay them where forgiveness is allowed

Let us bring here

Our hesitating faith

Our griefs and concerns

And lay them in this place called love

And in you

O God

Lover of us all

May we find the cords to hold onto

The words that bring certainty

The ground that is solid

The love that is secure

The hope that is real

Hear us

As we say the Lord’s Prayer together

Our Father, who is in heaven

Hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom, the power

And the glory, forever

Amen

**Scripture Introduction**

One of the things we have to continually remember is that the gospel takes place in the real world… We remember the parables and the one line wisdom… but the story itself is in the context of what is happening on the ground… and there are times when Jesus is clearly responding to what is contemporary to him… the news headlines of his day… And he refers to them and responds to them…

Here are two incidents that had just happened and Jesus is questioned on them or refers to them to open up a truth about the kingdom… but of course they are not as his hearers presume…

There is a way of believing that God is responsible for everything… even the bad things… but they happen because of something we have done, some sin of humanity… In Jesus day a tower fell down killing folk… in our world it could be AIDS, blamed on our living… or 9/11 or so many other things some religious folk have explained as God’s judgement on us…

Jesus simply and clearly says no to that… It was a shock however because if God didn’t do it… then does than mean God is no longer in charge of the world… thinks happen that are not under God’s control… That can be quite a shock… quite a shift in understanding…

Anyway, here is the passage from Luke…

**Scripture: Luke 13:1-9**

Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. **2**Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? **3**I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. **4**Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? **5**I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

**6**Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. **7**So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’

**8**“‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. **9**If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’”

**Reflection**

There is something about the spiritual life that invites us… or enables us… to see things differently… Now, this isn’t anything magical… it comes rather from a way of being in the world… If we live in hope… then we see things through hope… not just towards our neighbour… not just the world… but also the future…

If we live in truth… again we see the world through that lens… If we live in love… the lens through which we see the world is more positive and optimistic… Alternately, if we see the world through fear… or hatred… or pain… then our world tends to reflect that…

2000 years ago when something tragic happened… such as the tower falling on folk… a real life news event written into the gospels… the folk bring this incident to Jesus… folk who seem to see the world through the lens of fear and a judgemental God… Who sinned?… who did something wrong?… they ask… because that its how the world works… something bad happens in a world where God is in charge, then God must be punishing…

Jesus changes the paradigm however… this is not about sin… or evil… Jesus moves his hearers to hear a different version of events… moving them from interpreting life through a lens of judgement… to offering a different sense… one of hope…

The fig tree… says Jesus… is given a second chance… the tree that bears no fruit and ready for chopping down… is spared… its roots dug around… a little fertiliser added… and a wait… to see if that makes a difference…

From a worldview of judgement… to a worldview of grace…

That is quite a shift… But inbuilt into this parable is the gift of time… Next year… wait and see… Time to shift your perspective… Part of the parable recognises it is not easy to grasp a shifting paradigm… moving from one way of understanding… which we have taken for granted… to a different understanding…

It is a big shift… sometimes that shift takes a generation… or longer…

But that ability to shift… being able to see things from the completely opposite point of view… is not unknown to us… It is actually built into the very essence of our faith…

When we hear the word repentance… as we do in this passage… our minds turn us to think about behaviour… guilt… as if the word repentance is all about reforming our personal morality…

That’s not actually true… At its root, the word is about thinking and perception… it means seeing things from a different viewpoint…

It is a word… that is part of our faith’s DNA… that says it is possible to have an utter reconfiguration of our perspective on reality and meaning…

The outcome of this way of living is recognising that what we read in the news… does not capture the full extent of any story… Every shock and tragedy… includes an invitation to find God's grace, mercy, and justice, even if those things linger hidden below the surface.

This is what we can offer… the fig tree… whose roots are loosened from old soil… and nurtured with new soil… seeing things from a different perspective… the perspective of hope that offers a way through this world…

Yes it feels like a paradigm shift… it is!… trying to find the hope in the tragedy of Ukraine and Syria and Yemen and poverty and hunger… takes time… it feels too deep at the moment… but it is what we are called to offer… both our institution and the world… turn round… loosen the old roots… move away from judgement… and pick up a different perspective… fertilise roots with new soil… and live with grace rather than judgement… and let hope grow fruit once more…

**News**

**Prayers for Others**

Loving God

In the grace you shape the world

May we see the world

On the other side of tragedy

And hurt

And pain of conflict

May we see what is possible

And pray into that

And so we pray for peace

And justice

For Ukraine

When words fail us

And we cannot express the despondency we have

May we find a way to turn everything the other way

And seek out the hope

And invest in the life

And be generous with the possibilities of the future

May we make that possible

In the way we live

And the way we respond

And the lifestyle we choose

And the resources we need

And the cost that takes

Changing the world towards justice

Away from selfish and fear-filled ambition

And we pray for compassion

For those beyond our neighbourhoods

Yet within them too

For those who are finding hunger growing closer

And futures far more uncertain

And cost of living changing what we choose to do

May we seek out alternative lives and priorities

Of creating community

Of loving neighbour

Of living towards hope again

Of prioritising compassion and friendship and welcome

Changing the world towards renewal

And away from fear and competition and loneliness

And we pray for our families and friends

For those among we know are ill

Physically and mentally

Those with too much stress and anxiety

Who feel worthless and overwhelmed by life at the moment

Grieving and hurt

May we wait with grace

To offer signs of life and hope

Changing the world towards love

Hear us

The words spoken and left unsaid

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**