



Wilderness Training

Mirages

March 20, 2022

Lent 3

Rev. Emma Chattin, Preaching

First Reading ~ *Luke 13:1-9*

At that very time there were some present who told Jesus about some Jews from Galilee who Pilate had killed while they were at worship, mingling their blood with the blood of their sacrifices. Jesus replied, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will also perish. Or those eighteen who were killed by a falling tower in Siloam — do you think they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will also perish.”

Jesus told this parable: “There was a fig tree growing in a vineyard; the owner came out looking for fruit on it and didn’t find any. The owner said to the gardener, ‘Look here! For three years now I have come out in search of fruit on this fig tree and have found none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ In reply, the gardener said, ‘Please leave it one more year while I hoe around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

Second Reading ~ *adapted from Father Richard Rohr in “A Toxic Image of God”*

Your image of God helps create you- the person you are. This is why it is so important that we see God as loving and benevolent and why good theology is still important. One mistaken image of God that keeps us from receiving grace is the idea that God is a cruel tyrant. People who have been raised in an atmosphere of threats of punishment and promises of reward are programmed to operate with this cheap image of God. Unfortunately, it's much easier to organize people around fear and hatred than around love. Most people who want to hold onto power see God as vindictive and punitive. Powerful people actually prefer this view because it validates their use of intimidation. So much of Christian history has manifested a very different image of God than the one Jesus revealed and represented. As a result, we've developed an unworkable and toxic image of God, one that a healthy person would never trust. The mystical, transformative journey cannot take place until that image is undone. Why would you want to spend any time, even one hour in silence, solitude, or intimacy with such a God?