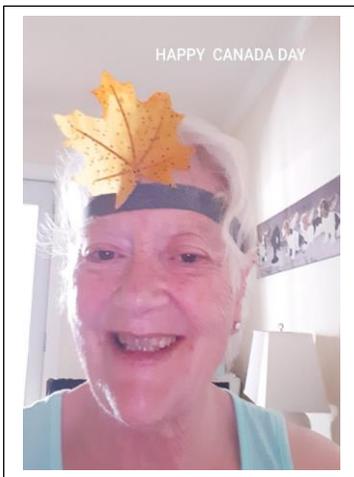


## Coop's Scoops #65, July 2, 2020

**C-A-N-A-D-A!** Hooray for Canada. It was a beautiful yet different celebration this year. I was so glad to see the multitudes of tiny flags on every yard and street in Bracebridge. There is an awesome group of people who cover every corner of the town leaping in and out of cars and planting the flags...thanks to you, whoever you may be. Perhaps one year, the Municipality could do a group picture of everyone involved in the process! As I live on Fraserburg Road way out in the rural lakes area, I don't actually get a small flag myself SOOOOOO....I had to make do with my own personal tribute showing my love for this country....and here it is.....



Kelly, Bill, Gregory and Claire enjoyed a swim and paddle board ride then stayed for dinner. When I brought in a scrumptious ice cream Canada Day cake from Momma Bears (yuuuummmmm) we all stood up around my dining room table and sang O Canada. And of course we thanked God for our wonderful nation and all the people who inhabit it.

**The fourth verse of O Canada is a prayer, seldom sung, but powerful! I enclose it here so we can all pray it together while apart:**

**Ruler Supreme, who hearest humble prayer,  
Hold our dominion in thy Loving care  
Help us to find, O God, in thee  
A lasting rich reward,  
As waiting for the better day,  
We ever stand on guard...  
God keep our land, glorious and free,  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee..  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee! Amen.**



There is a Muskoka Deanery Worship live-streaming this Sunday. Paul LeMay and Deacon Margaret Morrison will be participating along with the Ven. Kelly and others from churches across the deanery. Everything is taped alone, and then edited into one seamless piece. You can join in by going to Facebook and finding the Deanery of Muskoka page.



**The real thing- Australian sheep  
At Eastertide**

A pastor said: "You need to join the Army of the Lord!" My friend replied, "I'm already in the Army of the Lord, Pastor." Pastor questioned, "How come I don't see you except at Christmas and Easter?" He whispered back, "I'm in the secret service."

**Scripture for Today: Luke 13: 1-9 (challenging, with good news following..)**

**At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. <sup>2</sup> He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? <sup>3</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. <sup>4</sup> Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell**

on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? <sup>5</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”

<sup>6</sup> Then he told this parable: “ A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none.

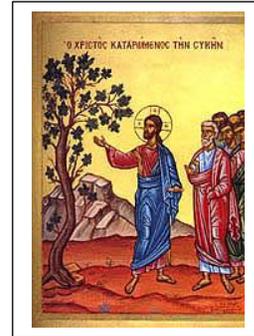
<sup>7</sup> So he said to the gardener, ‘See here!

For three years I have come looking for fruit on this

fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the

soil?’ <sup>8</sup> He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and

put manure on it. <sup>9</sup> If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”



**Homily:** We start with Jesus making His way to Jerusalem where much evil and suffering await Him. Jesus first answers questions from His disciples about whether or not people who died in a dreadful massacre, or people who died when a tower collapsed on them were worse sinners than anyone else. Jesus replies absolutely not! Their fate was not determined by their personal sin. And then Jesus seems to contradict Himself by saying “But unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” What can this mean? Then immediately, connectedly, Jesus teaches a parable about a rather useless fig tree that has never ever produced any fruit. The landowner says “Cut it down, it’s just wasting good soil” The gardener says “Let it be for one more year”, and promptly starts digging and cultivating and making room for one more chance to grow a fig. What does this teaching of Jesus mean for us?

**First: Bad things happen to good people and to bad people.** The quality of one’s character, moral compass, prayers and intentions neither cause nor prevent the common tragedies that happen in human life. We all **know** this. We know it from our own experience and if that weren’t enough all we have to do is pick up a newspaper to read about the suffering of innocents, and the bad ends of some truly bad people. When something dreadful happens, Jesus is saying that those who suffer from it are neither more evil or more saintly than anyone else. The disaster is not God’s doing or God’s fault or God’s punishment or God’s decree. Not in this

world. And those who proclaim things like the dreadful Haitian earthquake being God's punishment for the practice of voodoo; or murder being God's will for doctors who do legal abortions, or Covid God's punishment for.....? – well, I believe those folks are false prophets or false moral persecutors, and just plain Biblically WRONG! ( If you disagree, please don't stop reading yet....I'll get to it) God's intention is always that all people should come to be saved, to be healed, to know the fullness of life and joy and hope; and live as light and salt to one another. Period. **Sin can certainly be involved in suffering, but generally once-removed:** Maybe that towering aqueduct that fell on the bystanders was shoddy, built by someone so greedy that inferior goods were used...sin for sure, but not the personal sin of the sufferer. And sin is most certainly behind the atrocities of war and abuse of power resulting in hundreds of thousands of people being caught up in unimaginable suffering which they did nothing themselves to provoke.

**Second: Good things happen to good people and to bad people alike.** When the sun comes up it shines on everybody. And good things do not good or bad people make. There was once a very bad fig tree, and something unexpectedly good happened to it. We know the story. Usually we think of God as the landowner fed up with the tree, and Jesus as the Gardener and some sinner (usually ourselves) as the tree. Everything Jesus ever taught about His Father goes against that thinking! God is not a tyrant cruising around looking at who isn't being productive enough and wanting to annihilate them! God is like the gardener who, coming across someone whom the world would say is useless and undeserving nevertheless gets down on His Holy knees to dig up the soil and place some nutrients there and do some pruning to show that there is always an opportunity for growth and for fruit and for meaning in our lives. No tree, and no person, is so bad that God does not will their redemption. And no tree and no person is so good that God did not have to send His Son to fulfil their redemption.

**And thirdly: Repentance is the vehicle that moves us ever toward God and into His redeeming love.**

Repentance is not only, or even primarily, sorrow for sin. It is not even only, or primarily about confession and forgiveness. Repentance is a reshaping of our minds and our focus and our wills toward God. When we repent, we desire to leave behind those things, attitudes, activities which squeeze God out of our conscious intentions, and to move forward in ways which allow our faces to always be turned toward Him and to His love. Simply put, we cannot expect to

have the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, gentleness, patience, kindness, self-control if we insist on living in symbolic pig sties, bordellos or counterfeit goods warehouses. We may have visited...but we can't live there...if we do live there, and never refocus, we'll die there. And our life will be lost in every way that matters. For example, if a person willfully and knowingly persists in sexual immorality, they will not grow the fruit of unconditional love. They will not bear the fruit of faithfulness. That fruit will perish in them. If a person persists in greedy acquisition of money or power at any cost, they will never have the joy of simplicity or humility or kindness or generosity. That will die in them. Jesus is telling everyone that unless they focus on God, and God's purposes, and God's love and mercy, all that truly makes life **worth living** will indeed be destroyed in them. Perish. Utterly. And if that sounds too fearful, we must remember that the Gardener is always willing to cut away at the roots of what is evil in people, and put some good things into the soil and sow the seeds of the fruit of the Spirit to give all the **opportunity** to repent, and turn to Him and to grow beautiful fruit. No one ever needs to perish. Life never needs to be a living death.

Finally, as followers of Jesus, what can we say in the face of suffering and loss? We can say that God is with us, and God is for us, and God understands what suffering is like. That God has promised to redeem all things, including our own suffering. That suffering and injustice and pain do not have the last word in our lives or in our world. And that God continually awaits us, not passively, but with a gardener's heart and hands. That God will never stop urging us through His Spirit to turn away from our self-destructive habits and fears to be drawn again into His warm and loving embrace. When we can say all that, we will be **fruitful** trees indeed. Amen.

Blessings by Judie+

### **Prayer for the Day:**

Come, Spirit of Love! Penetrate and transform me by the action of Your purifying life. May your constant, brooding love bring forth in me the fruit of love and all the many graces and deeds of love. Give me grace to remain still under Your action in me, and may that humble stillness be my repentance and my acceptance of Your transforming power. Through Christ my Lord, Amen ( adapted prayer of Evelyn Underhill)

Like a tree in the spring, reaches up to the sky,  
And its blossoms burst forth bearing fruit by and by -  
Let us reach to the Lord, trust the power of His Word  
And bring fruit, beautiful fruit to the Lord.



Like a branch withered up, lying dead on the ground  
I can't make fruit myself, in the Vine life is found,  
So let's reach to the Lord, trust the Power of His Word  
And bring fruit, beautiful fruit to our Lord.

( Children's chorus, written by Judie as a teenager for a Sunday School  
gathering....how time flies )

**Prayer for our Concurrence Committee:**

Almighty God, giver of all good gifts, look on your Church with grace and guide  
the minds of those who shall choose a Priest for our congregations, that we may  
receive a faithful servant who will care for your people and support us in our  
ministries; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Good day, and God Bless You!

Judie+