

Third Sunday in Lent
Year C

Exodus 3:1-15

Psalm 63:1-8

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Luke 13:1-9

Why was God upset with the Israelites during their time in the wilderness and what does that have to do with the mostly Greek congregation in Corinth? What bearing does that have on us today? As we try to deepen our relationship with God during this season of Lent, these are important questions to ask.

The primary issue God had with the people of Israel during their Exodus through the wilderness was the lack of trust the Israelites showed toward God. They continually complained about the conditions they were suffering through, all the while forgetting the fact that God had freed them from the bondage in Egypt. They were hungry, but didn't like the manna. They were thirsty, but the water wasn't OK. The simple fact that their clothes did not wear out, the feet didn't swell, they had food and water - none of this was good enough. Therefore, as soon as Moses went up the mountain to talk with God, they turned their backs on God and created their own golden image to worship. They abandoned the Creator for a created god. Therefore, God destroyed most of them.

Paul warns the Corinthians not to fall into the same trap. He tells them not to become idolaters. He warns them not to test God as the Israelites had. How might the Corinthians be becoming idolaters? What is an idol? That was the question Paul was trying to answer for these people.

An idol is any created thing we might worship or reverence. We have a TV show called *American Idol*. The winner of the competition gets a recording contract and lots of praise. We have sports stars who kids want to emulate. Any person who seems to be successful in any walk of life seems to be idolized by someone. Beyond people, we tend to make idols of many objects, including money, cars, houses, and a wide variety of things. We place our trust or faith in most anything but God. This is exactly what Paul was trying to help the people of Corinth avoid.

Do we do any better? How often do we hear people brag about being "self-made"? We see individuals all around us who feel they have the ability, intelligence, and wealth to supply all of their needs. Like the rich man who decided to pull down his barns and build bigger ones in the Bible story, we see people have the attitude they need no one, including God.

Like the Israelites of old, these people will meet a situation where they cannot do it all on their own. There will come a time when, like the rich man in the Bible story, when they will need to make an accounting for their actions. What can we do to help warn them, to try to turn them around? We can join Paul and show them the example of the Israelites. We can try to redirect their focus from themselves to those around them. But, that is not all.

God has called us to be an example to those around us. We need to live our lives as an example to the people with whom we come in contact. Do we trust God, or do we complain about how bad things are? Do we look to God for our help, or do we run to the bank for a loan? Is our hope solely in our own strength, or do we seek God's assistance in our lives as we face medical issues, financial problems, or any number of other obstacles that we face daily?

How we live our lives before man tells us how much we trust God for our needs. As one writer said, "Idolatry is not good for anyone. Not even idols." Where we put our trust is what or who we worship. As Joshua said to the Israelites, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." Let that be our cry also.