



SAINT MARK'S

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*C Lent 3, Luke 13:1-9, 3-3-13
St. Mark's, Little Rock,
Danny Schieffler*

In the movie

“Gone With the Wind”

Scarlett has many talents

but dealing with things today

is not one of them.

What she can do is say this

“I don’t want to think about today.

I’ll think about that tomorrow.”

In the “The Urban Dictionary” online

this condition is now called “the Scarlett syndrome.”

You can even buy T shirts and mugs

with Scarlett’s advice

touted

as the perfect cure

for whatever ails you.

I don't want to think about that today.

In the Screwtape Letters

By C. S. Lewis

Screwtape

One of the Sr. Assistants to the devil

writes to his nephew Wormwood

a demon in training

about a number of different ways

that Wormwood

might pursue his human subject.

And he especially points out ways

to keep a human being

away from the Enemy

who is of course God.

Screwtape tells Wormwood

one of the best ways

is to get the human

not to think about the present

but if possible

get him to live in past

or better yet

get his mind dwelling on the Future--

get him thinking about things

which may never even happen.

And whatever you do

Screwtape says

Keep his mind off of the present.

“The Present is the point at which time touches Eternity.

The Present is all lit up with eternal rays.”

...so its far better to get humans

to live in the Future.

Screwtape continues

Nearly all of the vices are rooted in the future

Gratitude looks to the past

And love to the present

But fear, avarice, lust, ambition

and I would add worry

all look ahead.

What we want, Screwtape says

Is the whole human race
perpetually in pursuit of the rainbow's end
but never ...happy **now** .

the present

is nothing more than a stepping stone to the future.

In today's gospel from Luke

Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem for his last visit
before the cross.

And so there's an urgency
about his message to crowd.

On the way

the crowd following Jesus
gets word that two horrible things have happened.

First down in Jerusalem

Pilate's soldiers have massacred some folks from Galilee
worshipping in the Temple.

We don't know why

We just know that they were killed
while making their sacrifices.

And over in Siloam

18 more people died

when a tower collapsed.

And so the crowd is wondering --

as many believed in those days

Were they sinners?

Were they just getting

what they deserved?

they ask Jesus.

Jesus replies though

You're worrying about the wrong thing.

They weren't any worse

than anyone else.

What you ought to be worrying about

is yourselves

Take a look in the mirror

The present is the time to repent

You're thinking about tomorrow

But here may not be a tomorrow.

Jesus knows the danger of not living in the present.

The world is filled with distractions about the future

And here's the ironic thing

nobody is promised the future

The only promise is today.

And so Jesus goes on to tell them a parable

--about a fruit tree

that is not bearing fruit.

The owner of the orchard is ready to cut it down

because this tree

is just taking up space

But the gardener says to the owner

Let me work with it one more time

Let me dig around it

And fertilize it

Let me help its roots go deeper

I think it will bear fruit

But if it doesn't,

then let's us cut it down.

And so this parable ends,

with the tree

getting another chance.

It seems to me that this is part of the meaning

of what today is all about

--Its another chance for each of us

to live in the present,

a chance to quit worrying about what may happen tomorrow

and start living the life that God has for each of us

today.

a chance to stop getting irritated

when a child interrupts

even though we think we have more important things to do

and instead be present

to that child

and be grateful for the moment.

A chance to stop stressing out

about some urgent task that our job demands

even though we have many other things to do

and instead be present to the now

to the thing

that is before us.

The present is what matters

because just as Screwtape says

The present is “shot through with the rays of eternity.”

Its where miracles happen

Its where we learn to forgive

Its where marriages are saved

Its where lives begin to bear fruit

And when we focus on the present

just as Moses discovered a long time ago

its where bushes begin to burn.