

## The Gospel According to Luke

Luke 13:1-9

Reading: Luke 13:1-9

Sermon #58

November 17, 2019

### Repent or Perish

#### Confusion

Luke begins with some in the crowd reporting the news of a current event. It appears to be tied to the end of chapter 12 where Jesus said the people could interpret the weather but not spiritual things. Please open your Bible to Luke chapter 12, I will be reading beginning at verse 54, “He also said to the crowds, ‘When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, “A shower is coming.” And so it happens. <sup>55</sup> And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, “There will be scorching heat,” and it happens. <sup>56</sup> You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?’” Now in chapter 13 it is as if the crowd wants to convince Jesus they understand the signs of the time, they can discern spiritual things. Luke begins chapter 13 with people in the crowd saying to Jesus, “There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.” This incident is not known to us from any other source, but it fits in with what we know of Pilate’s character. It may very well have been at the time of the Passover feast and celebration with people traveling from all over Israel to sacrifice. Tradition and historical accounts indicate there had begun an uprising in rebellion against the Roman occupation of Israel. Pilate being the Roman governor in charge responded brutally, which was his nature, by sending troops and while those insurrectionists were worshipping, they were slaughtered along with the animal sacrifices. The blood of those slaughtered

was mingled with the blood of the animals. This was a horrifying thought for the Jews.

The crowd is responding to Jesus that they understand bad things happen to people and it is usually because the people are bad and deserve it. For the people to have been slaughtered they must have been terrible sinners. As was common at the time of Jesus and is common today people try and figure out the signs of the times by looking at current events and relating them to what God is doing. One can observe world events and what is happening in the Middle East and more specifically Israel and get a general sense of the things that the Scripture says must happen before the Lord's return, but not the details of when. This takes us back to verse 46 of chapter 12, **“the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know.”** So, the crowd brings up this event concluding that God punishes those who are bad. I remember hearing after September 11, 2001 that God was punishing America for turning away from him. That statement is a discussion for another time. But for now, remember, God allows people free will and some do evil and acts of evil shows people their desperate need for God, but God does not do evil.

## **Pray**

## **Clarification**

Jesus answers the crowd's question with a question. Jesus asks, **“Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way?”** It was commonly held belief that disasters and illness and suffering were punishment for sin. In John's gospel it is recorded, **“As Jesus passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> And his disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’”** (John 9:1-2) So,

even the disciples had held this belief. In their minds horrible sin equaled horrible punishment and horrible punishment was the result of sin. It was the same kind of thinking that Jobs friends had when they saw the suffering of Job. In their minds they thought, *Job, you must have done some very serious sinning in your life for God to do all this to you.* Remember it was not God who did these horrible things to Job. It was the same type of thinking that brought Jesus' disciples to ask the question, "who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" How did Jesus respond to this wrong thinking? "Jesus answered, 'It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.'" (John 9:3) All things, good or bad may be used to display the glory of God.

Therefore, Jesus immediately makes the point that these Galileans had not been singled out for a horrible death because they were worse sinners than other people. Jesus does not give the crowd time to answer his question but answers it himself, "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Jesus calls those listening to repent, otherwise they "will all likewise perish." Jesus sees no need to clarify that all people are sinners and need repentance. The crowd was just like people today; bad things happen to bad people; bad things happen to others – certainly one's self should not suffer. Other people's sins brings judgment but a person sees their own sin as not really sin and their behavior should somehow be exempt. Jesus is saying to all sinners and as Paul would later write, "For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." ... "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 3:22-24; 6:23) These are the first 2 verse references of what is called the "Roman Road of Salvation" it is often shared with people to help them see their need for Jesus. I have printed some and they are at the back of the church.

The point here is simple; whether one lives a short or long time the only solution to their sin is believing in Jesus as the Redeemer and Savior and Christ.

Let us look to God's Word today and not ask questions of God as if we are putting Him on trial – for He does not owe us an explanation or an apology for the unfolding of history with its good and evil for all of these serves his plan of redemption for mankind. We want to focus on Jesus' question. Notice His question is not, "God why did this happen?" His question is meant to show us that without repentance, we will all suffer in a similar way.

Because fallen mankind's hearts are drawn towards evil all people suffer from the collective sin of mankind. Jesus continues with another current event known to the people. Continuing in verse 4 of Luke 13, "Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem?" The fall of the tower of Siloam is not mentioned in other historical records, and, since the Bible gives no more detail of the structure's collapse, we cannot be sure what the tower was for or why it fell. Jesus to uses this tragedy as an example because it would have been well-known. Siloam was an area just outside the walls of Jerusalem on the southeast side of the city. A spring-fed pool was there, which was the scene of one of Christ's miracles found in John chapter 9. The tower of Siloam may have been part of an aqueduct system or a construction project that Pilate had begun. In any case, the tower fell, and eighteen people were killed in the catastrophe. Jesus is saying that these 18 did not die because of their sin. So, he continues, saying, "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." The line or connection should **not** be drawn from tragedy to those who are horrible sinners but from tragedy to every human living under the sin of Adam. The conclusion is that tragedy and sin are part of a broken world that effects everyone. Without

repentance, without Jesus the Redeemer as our Lord and Savior all perish eternally. Jews who believed in God were to love their Roman conquerors and non-Jews for love will counter evil. Jesus said, *“I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,<sup>45</sup> so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”* (Matthew 5:44-45) One cannot love in this manner if one does not repent and take the love of God into their hearts.

Some people, when the preacher begins preaching a sermon on repentance, zone out because they think it is a sermon that pertains to everyone except them. They think, *that was a good sermon preacher; I am sure there were people here that really needed to hear that message on repentance.* Because of our pride, we might think, if I were in the crowd that day with Jesus, the reason Pilate killed those particular Galileans or the tower fell on those particular people in Jerusalem that day and I did not suffer is because they were worse sinners than I am. I know that I am right with God because He has not dropped a tower on my head. So, given our paradigm, we say, I am alive and well because my sin is not as bad as all those dead people. I remember when a friend was dying of cancer and someone said to me that she was suffering for her sins. Well, we all suffer from the collective sin since the fall, but to say a person has cancer because of their sin is an outpouring of one's arrogance and pride. Jesus is teaching us today, he is saying, *“Oh no, do not draw a line from tragedy to them, but draw that line from tragedy to yourself.”*

What is the point? Whenever we witness or hear of some catastrophic event where many people perish, we must **never** think we are better than them because God killed them by passing judgment and we are spared, oh no, Jesus' point is that

we are all such retched sinners that it is only in God's mercy and grace that we are not all dead.

The real question we should ask is not why did that hurricane or earthquake or tsunami kill so many but why does not God destroy the whole of the evil in the world. The reason any, including you and me, can currently take a breath of fresh air is because God is longsuffering and is waiting for repentance. As the Apostle Peter explained, "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) Why is God currently showing mercy to some? He is patiently waiting for them to repent.

It is so important that when we share the Gospel with others that we speak about their sin and their need to repent. We have got to start being biblical with our talk. Do not call sin - mistakes or slip-ups or issues, but call sin, sin. Jesus did not come to save losers, He came to save sinners, Paul says, he was the chief of sinners. We also must use biblical language when we speak of the remedy to sin. The only hope for sinners is to trust Christ and turn to Him in repentance and faith. Jesus clearly says, unless we repent, we will all likewise perish. This begs the question, "What is repentance?" Well, let me give you my definition, maybe not the best definition, but one that I hope helps you in your understanding.

**Repentance is a heartfelt and soulful sorrow for one's sin, it is a renouncing of one's sin and a sincere desire that produces a commitment to forsake and stop sinning and live in obedience to Jesus Christ.** Paul's letters often brought grief because they exposed sin, he wrote, "I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. <sup>10</sup> For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death." (2 Corinthians

7:9-10) Repentance is a sorrow over sin. Not sorrow that you got caught or sorrow over consequences. Repentance is a sorrow over sin because it is against God.

Jesus wants us to see one last thing today. It is not that God is quick to judge or just waiting to get even with us. The true picture of God is a patient Father waiting and nurturing in a desire that none should perish. This brings us to verses 6 to 9.

## Compassion

Reading beginning at verse 6 of Luke chapter 13, *And Jesus told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. <sup>7</sup> And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?’ <sup>8</sup> And he answered him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. <sup>9</sup> Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”*

God is patient and longsuffering. He prolongs judgment while sinners repent. He is pictured here as the Gardener or Vinedresser who will patiently cultivate, prune, fertilize and nurture. So, we see that God is not quick to deal out pain and death to those he created out of love. However, He is no push over. There will come a time when His patience is gone. He waits for the sinner to repent. He works in the life of the sinner drawing him to repent for he is a loving Father. But when death takes a person or Jesus returns the time of patience will be over.

Then, once the sinner has repented and turned from sin to Christ, God works in their life to cause continual repentance. Do you know how you can tell you are a Christian? One way is you are currently repenting. We all struggle with sin from

time to time. Every time we sin, we must come to God in repentance. It is only as the Holy Spirit works within our lives that we see the need to repent and are given the power to repent and to overcome sin. I need to ask you today, “Do you believe what Jesus says in this passage? Do you believe what he is saying about repentance and perishing?” If we believe Him - then we will be repenting.

Time is marching on and no one knows how much time they have. God is patient, he is a loving Father, he nurtures and prunes to cause fruitfulness, but there comes a time to burn. Jesus says, “For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, <sup>44</sup> for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. <sup>45</sup> The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:43-45) “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.” (Matthew 7:19-20) The fruit of a Christian for the kingdom is an outpouring of a repentant heart and soul.

For the lost person that may be here today, unless you repent, you will likewise perish. Unless you repent you will spend an eternity perishing. Jesus is calling, “Come to Me in faith and repent and know the Father’s love for eternity.”

My beloved, do you believe these words of Christ? If so, then you must be telling others. If your loved ones and friends do not repent, they will ALL perish. Jesus’ Words are far reaching and apply to every person who has ever lived and will live - both lost and saved alike.

Again, I plead, if you do not know Christ, come to Him, believe in Him, come to Christ in faith and repentance.

To those whom God has saved, I say to you, practice daily repentance and call others you know in your life to faith and repentance.

We must realize that the tragic events recorded in today's passage in Luke were nothing compared to the pain and suffering Jesus endured to save the very sinners who deserved God's wrath. Because of Jesus' suffering and the cross, where he paid for our sins, we who deserve death because of sin can experience forgiveness and life.

Why do bad things happen? We live in a sinful and broken world. We live in a fallen world. We live in a perishing world and it too will someday burn. But for now as God unfolds his plan of redemption there is a God who saves the perishing. God saves those who repent from burning.

Run to Jesus and be saved, repent today and live! Amen and amen!