

SERMON FOR MARCH 24, 2019

TEXT: LUKE 13: 1-5

THEME: REPENT OR PERISH

There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? ³ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. ⁴ 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? ⁵ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

In the name of Jesus:

Week after week, day after day, the airwaves, the newsprint, the alerts on our phones cry out with all sorts of bad news, terrible tragedies that take place here and around the world. A new jumbo jet, for no apparent reason at all, falls out of the sky and hundreds of people die in Ethiopia. Worshippers at Mosques in New Zealand are gunned down in cold blood. The Midwest states of Nebraska and Iowa are hit with heavy rains and flooding takes place, some lose their lives as a result of the floods and many more are uprooted from their homes. All sorts of events take place on a national, international, and even on a personal level and we are left with so many questions and not enough answers. It is natural to ask the question, "Why?"

In our text for this morning, people in Jesus' day were asking Jesus those very same questions. Two incidents took place, which raised the ire and caused people to question what was going on. One incident took place at the Temple in Jerusalem. People assembled for worshipped, and during worship, Pilate sent in troops to kill the Galilean worshippers while they were offering animal sacrifices in the Temple. Apparently they were slaughtered, and the scene was gruesome. The blood of the worshippers mixed with the blood of the animals. What a horrific scene!

Then, not long after that, a tower in Siloam, which was part of the fortification of Jerusalem, collapsed for no reason at all. The number of dead was 18 in all; probably more were wounded and injured in the rubble.

Now, people had come to Jesus with serious questions. Why do these bad things happen? What did they do to deserve this? Was God getting back at them for something they had done? Their questions were many, and cut to the chase, so to speak. Note how Jesus responded to their questions: ““Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? ³ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise

perish. ⁴ 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?"

Jesus doesn't give these questioners the answers that they were looking for, at least, the answers that they expected. All too often when bad things happen, our human nature responds by asking questions like these people did of Jesus, and in our questions we try to connect the dots. We think, "well, this terrible tragedy happened because this person did something terribly wrong." We even think to ourselves when bad things happen to us, "What in the world did I do to deserve this?" But did you catch what Jesus said in His answer? The people questioned Jesus asking who were the worst sinners! Were the Galileans worst sinners because of the slaughter that took place in the Temple? Or were the 18 who lost their lives in the tower catastrophe, were they worst sinners than the others? In these cases, Jesus said that these things that happened were not a result of some particular sin.

We need to remember this truth that bad things happen to people, not as a result of some particular sin. Children in the cancer ward at Nationwide Children's Hospital, are they suffering from cancer because of some sin that they have committed? NO! Those people living in the

Midwest, who suffer from the flooding, are they suffering because of a particular sin that they committed? NO! A person who is shot in a drive by shooting, did it happen because of some particular sin that that person committed? NO!

So why do these things happen? Why do bad things happen to seemingly innocent people? Jesus doesn't give us an answer in the abstract; He speaks to each person, and each one of us, specifically, in our own situations, in whatever bad and terrible things that take place in our lives. No matter if they are major like the instances I have described, or relatively minor such as a cut finger, skinned knee, or a broken part on a household appliance, all serve as examples that we are living in a broken and fallen world. God created this world good and perfect, yet through the disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, sinned entered the world and sin brings with it brokenness and death. Women giving birth to children in pain, thorns sticking into hands and fingers when you work in the garden, all these things and more are signs of the sinful world we live in. Things don't work the way God intended, and it isn't God's fault, it is ours. And so Jesus says: Unless you repent, you too will perish.

The wages of sin is death; death is what we all deserve. But Jesus goes one step farther and says that unless we repent, we won't just die a physical death, but we will die an eternal death as well. To perish means that we will die eternally in the flames of Hell, that place of torment reserved for the Devil and his followers. We are on the road to Hell, and the bad things that happen to us, small or large, serve to remind us that death comes to all of us and we can't escape from the wrath of God. So we need to recognize our sinful condition and turn from finding the answers to our questions in ourselves to turning to God's Son, Jesus, who is the Answer to all of our questions, for He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

What do you think about when you hear bad things happen in our world? What is your response to the bad news that takes place in our lives and in the world around us? This is the answer Jesus seeks, our response to the evil that is in us and around us. Instead seeking answers with our own wisdom, turn from self and return to the Lord. For the Lord has taken upon Himself our sins in His perfectly led life, His innocent suffering and damnable death on the cross. Jesus says that God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, so that all

may not perish, but by faith in the Son of God might have eternal life.

Many in the world think of believing in Jesus as religious foolishness.

“²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

So what does the Lord have to say to you when bad things happen in your life and in the world around you? How shall we live our lives in this season of Lent? How shall we live our lives as Christians? By examining our lives in the light of God’s Law, by realizing that we, like everyone else, all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God. There is no one perfect, not anyone of us. So confess your sins to the Lord. Confess your sins for He is faithful and just and forgives you all of your sins. He says to you and me: ““Come now, let us reason together, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.” Turn to the

Lord, put your faith and trust in Him, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. For Jesus forgives you all of your sins.

Amen