

SERMON FOR MARCH 20, 2022

TEXT: LUKE 13: 1-9

THEME: WE ARE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT

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. **6** And he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. **7** 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?’ **8** And he answered him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. **9** Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.”

The Tacoma Narrows Suspension Bridge opened on July 1, 1940.

Numerous designs were considered but the one chosen called for short girders that would provide a more elegant appearance while still coming in under budget. But after the bridge was built, it was discovered that the wind would cause portions of the bridge to rise and fall. The bridge was given the nickname “Galloping Gertie” and on November 7 of that same year the bridge collapsed into the waters below.

The bridge had a faulty design. Much like that bridge, you and I are faulty to our core. That fault is called sin. While God designed us perfectly, for we are His handiwork, sin has corrupted His design. Creation has been so corrupted by sin that everything collapses in its wake, our relationship with God and with one another, and it all culminates in death, for sin pays off with death.

We are all in the same boat. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Each and everyone of us is a sinner. That is the point that Jesus is making in our text. He speaks of two tragedies that happened around the time He spoke, a tower falling and killing people and people slaughtered during worship. Who is the worst of sinners, that is the question posed to Jesus?

It is a question people ask today, who is the worst of sinners. We like to compare ourselves with others in order to justify ourselves and our behavior. But Jesus doesn't play that game. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We are all in the same boat.

Consider the child, diagnosed with cancer in Children's Hospital. Is that child a worse sinner than any of us? NO! Or think of the person who is killed by a drunk driver, is that person a worse sinner because he or she suffered that fate? NO! What about the children who were shot and killed in a

drive-by shooting last year in Columbus, did they die because they were worse sinners than any of us? Absolutely not!

We wait for Jesus to answer these questions, but Jesus doesn't. What He does say is this: Unless you repent, you too will perish, and to perish means to go to Hell, a worse tragedy than anything that can happen here on earth in our life. To perish means to be separated from God, forever, never even having a chance to have a change of heart. Jesus uses the examples of this world to say simply this: Turn to God, turn to Jesus, trust in Him for He loves you with an everlasting love.

The Apostle Paul recognized this when he wrote: "Wretched man that I am, who will save me?" The One who saves is Jesus, who is the perfect representation of the Father, for He and the Father are one. Christ came into our world not to condemn but to save. He makes all things new. And He does so by means of His life, death, and resurrection.

Sin has spread to all people, and for everyone it can be said that the wages of sin is death. Just as sin and death have corrupted the people and the world we live in, so God in His mercy covers the world with His grace. God has forgiven you. He blesses you with His love.

The blessings of God are given you in Baptism. In your Baptism God has made you into a new you. Your sins have been washed in the blood of the

Lamb, and your sinful nature called the Old Adam has been drowned and died in the waters of Baptism. The Holy Spirit creates in you a new heart and new life, so that you can rise daily through faith in Jesus to serve Him.

That is what a life of repentance is all about. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We can not stand in the presence of the Holy One. But Jesus came down from heaven to take on our human nature and our sin. Through faith in Him we are forgiven. Like a defense attorney Jesus stands by our side and pleads His blood before the Father. And the Father declares us forgiven, “not guilty” all on account of Jesus.

This moves John to write: “We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous One, who is the propitiation for our sins and the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2, my paraphrase).

It is because of Jesus that we live lives of repentance. Dying to sin and living for Jesus. We can now live with the realization that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We don't have to pretend to be perfect or excuse our sinful behavior. Instead we recognize our sinfulness, confess it, and trust that it has been nailed to the cross of Jesus. And then we live our lives in thanks to Him who loves us and continues to plead on our behalf.

Repentant living is liberated living. Knowing that God forgives and forgets, we move forward in life in faith and joy. For repentance is not about God asking us to improve. Repentance is admitting our sin, and trusting in Jesus who forgives all sin. Then, in thanks to Him who loves and forgives us, we live our lives in joy, showing our thanks to Him by loving Him first and foremost, and by showing that love in how we live for others, loving our neighbor as Jesus loves us.

To His glory and honor.

Amen