

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Lent 3C
March 20, 2022
Luke 13:1-9

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." (Luke 13:1-5 ESV)

In the Name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world.

The Lord Jesus comes seeking fruit, but it's not figs. Will He find it? Will He find any who repent of their sins, any who turn from their wicked way? God grant that He does. Today we hear about the necessity of repentance in spades. And it's good that we do. After all, Lent is a season of repentance, as is the whole of the Christian life. Such repentance, trusting God's Word as it does, helps us to see and understand things properly. And the failure to repent, the refusal to recognize our sin, turn from it, and bear fruit which demonstrates that turning, leaves us to perish eternally. That's why repentance is so vitally critical in our lives as Jesus shows us.

Now, whenever we hear of horrible, tragic, even catastrophic events, such as, severe flooding, a violent death by shooting or stabbing, a car accident, a mass murder, a hurricane or tornado, or even the death of a child, what do we think? We might wonder why such bad things happen to good people. Or we might think that we must be pretty good since it didn't happen to us. Or, as is quite common, we might think that the person is in heaven because he died in such a horrible or tragic way.

But in the Bible, when something bad happened, people thought the person deserved it, that they were worse sinners than others. So when someone told Jesus about the mass murder of some Galileans at the temple in Jerusalem, He doesn't respond as the people expected – or as we might expect. He says, "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." Jesus turns their question into a call to repentance. It's not "what about them" but "what about you?"

For it seems that those telling Jesus about this incident seemed to think the victims of this mass murder somehow must have been worse sinners, because they suffered such an awful fate. It's not really all that uncommon though. Job's friends thought that Job must have done something

really bad for him to be suffering like he was. And when Jesus and His disciples encounter a man born blind, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was afflicted with this blindness?" The idea was that bad things happen to bad people.

But Jesus doesn't see it that way, "No, I tell you, those Galileans who were killed, was not because they were worse sinners." Just because people die in a particularly violent or tragic way doesn't mean that they must have deserved it, that they were worse sinners than others. But Jesus gives no indication that because people are innocent victims of terrible tragedies, they must automatically be in heaven. Again, the question is, "What about you?" Repent!

When hearing of such events, Jesus says, "But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." And then He adds His own example, "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?" Well, you can predict Jesus' answer: "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

Thus, Jesus takes these examples of sudden, unexpected, even violent death, and uses them to call our attention to matters of our own life and death. Instead of wondering about the fate of others, the question is, "Why not you? Are you ready to die?" These examples show you that death could come at any time, in almost any way, and that should be a wake-up call to all of us. Don't get caught up in whether those people killed in this or that tragedy were worse sinners--or conversely, that they all must now be in heaven. That's not at all what Jesus is driving at. He is stressing the necessity and urgency of our own repentance. He's warning us that there is judgment coming, something worse than being cut down by Pilate's soldiers or having a tower fall on you. Are you ready for that? If not, you will perish.

Ezekiel lays out for us the need for repentance too. If you've lived a good, God-pleasing life, then turn from God's Word into sin and unbelief, you will perish if you do not repent. Likewise, if you have lived a sinful, wicked life, but then repent, that is, you sorrow over your sin, turn from it, and believe in God's forgiveness in Christ, then you will be saved. Thus, the necessity to always live according to God's Word and ways, including repenting of our sins.

Now the fact that Jesus is telling us this, that He's alerting us to our need and calling us to repentance is part of His grace toward us. We need to hear His call to repentance and know that we need help, that we need rescuing.

And Jesus is just the man to do that rescuing. That is why He came. That's why He continues to come to us and call us to repentance. So that we might be saved and not perish! After all, God's will is to save. You heard it in Ezekiel: "As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." In 2 Peter, it says: "The Lord is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." And of course, John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." God does not want you to

perish! God wants you to repent, to turn from your sin, to have eternal life, and this repentance and life is only in His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In the slaughter at the temple mentioned in our text, Pontius Pilate mingled the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices. But there was one more Galilean whose blood Pilate would shed, and that would be this man, Jesus of Nazareth. His blood, Christ's blood, is the sacrifice! It is the one supreme sacrifice to end all sacrifices. For His is the blood of the holy Son of God, shed on our behalf, that cleanses us from all our sin. His blood has universal effectiveness: It covers the sins of the whole world.

And now God calls us and all people everywhere to repent and believe in Christ. Trust in Him alone, not in yourself and your works, or in any gods of your own making. Christ alone is your righteousness, your salvation, your one and only reliable "ticket to heaven." In Him, through faith in Him, you do have everlasting life, and your life will show it.

Thank God for His call to repentance. Christ Jesus is our only hope in the midst of all tragedy and loss. Christ Jesus is our only sure and lasting comfort, who will carry us through this vale of tears and bring us to Himself. He will wipe away every tear from our eyes and give us a joy that lasts forever. God grant you such repentance and such faith that you will bear fruit and dwell with Him forever. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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