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Repentance Required

LUKE 13:1-9

Introduction

1. Recently, we have seen a good bit of tragedy all around us:
 - a. Lives lost due to COVID19, genocide in other nations and the violent protests in various cities across our own nation.
 - b. Hurricanes and flooding to our south, fires to our west, earthquakes in other parts of the world.
 - c. On a personal level we know of children born with birth defects or who suffer from serious diseases and those who die "before their time."
2. The question we often ask is "Why?"
3. Why did this happen to these people, but not those?
4. Such questions cause some to doubt God's existence, and if not His existence, at least His goodness and fairness.
5. Perhaps, we find ourselves like Asaph, in Psalm 73, "When I tried to understand all this, it seemed hopeless" (v. 16, HCSB).
6. In the text before us, Jesus gives us some answers.
7. However, His true desire is not to resolve our doubts, but to make us question where we stand before God.
8. As He sets forth one undeniable truth, we must each stop and consider where we stand.
9. I hope you will listen with an open heart to what He has to say.

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I. Without Repentance We Cannot Escape The Severity of God

A. THE MASSACRE OF THE GALILEANS (vv. 1-3)

Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices” (v. 1).

1. In the midst of Jesus’ teaching on this occasion, some of those who were present reported to Jesus “about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices” (v. 1).
2. We know nothing more about this incident than what Luke indicates here.
3. The most reasonable explanation is that it took place at the temple during Passover.
4. This was the only time when those who were not priests or Levites were involved in the slaughter of animal sacrifices.
5. These Galilean pilgrims were in the process of offering Passover sacrifices in the temple.
6. It seems that Pilate thought they were somehow guilty of insurrection and instructed his soldiers to attack them when they least expected it.
7. This resulted in their blood being mixed with the blood of their sacrifices.
8. The people who brought up the event seemed to have believed as did many of Jesus’ day, that those who were victims of misfortunes and calamities were guilty of extraordinary sins which they had kept secret.
 - a. During his day, Job’s friends believed the great tragedy which had fallen upon him was the result of some great sin in his life.
 - b. Even Jesus’ disciples questioned whether the blindness of the man in John 9 was the result of his sin or that of his parents.
9. In His response to them, Jesus did not deny that sin sometimes brings tragedy, because it does (cf. the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, John 5:14).

“Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you” (v. 14).

10. Instead, He asked them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate?” (v. 2).
11. He then drove His point home, “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (v. 3).
12. The truth is death will come to all of us and many of us will likely face some tragedy in our lives.
13. The question is have we used the opportunities God has given us to repent of our sins and seek Him?
14. If not, we will be lost.

Slide 3**B. THE TRAGEDY IN SILOAM (VV. 4-5)**

1. There are two types of tragedies:
 - a. Those caused by evil people (i.e., the murder of the Galileans).
 - b. Those caused by accidents or natural disasters.
2. Jesus utilized this second type of tragedy to further strengthen his point.
3. Like the incident involving the sacrifices, we know nothing more about this one than what Luke provides for us.
4. Based upon information from the Jewish historian, Josephus, many believe there was a tower which one stood where the south and east walls of Jerusalem met.
5. It is possible that this tower may have fallen during the construction of an aqueduct from the reservoir of Siloam in order to improve the water supply.
6. In order to drive his point home, Jesus said:

“Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?” (v. 4).
7. What as He saying? All of those who died were average sinners just like each of us.
8. His point? Same as last time. “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all

likewise perish” (v. 5).

9. All of us are sinners, we all “fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).
10. We are all guilty. We all deserve death.

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C. WHAT IS REPENTANCE

1. Jesus call to repentance is a warning light.
2. A problem exists between each of us and God which requires both acknowledgment and corrective action on our part.
3. But what is repentance?
4. It is not an obligatory “confession” in which a person is instructed to carry out certain mechanical exercises as a means of making restitution or pay the price of a specific sin in some way.
5. Repentance, starts with a “change of mind,” but not in the sense that we change our mind only to change it back again.
6. From there, it repentance moves to a change of actions.
6. It is a real turnaround in a person’s life with respect to our conduct.
7. Repentance is not an option. It must take place before our sins can be removed in order for us to become a Christian.

“Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)

“Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;” (Acts 3:19)

8. God looks for fruit in our lives that is evidence of the change that has taken place when we became Christians and that continues to take place as we grow in the faith.

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II. Let Us Be Grateful For The Goodness of God

A. THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE

1. Jesus further illustrates the need for repentance through a parable about a fig tree:

“A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any.

“And he said to the vineyard-keeper, ‘Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?’

“And he answered and said to him, ‘Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.’ ”

2. In this parable there are three symbolisms for us to recognize:
 - a. The *fig tree* represents those who are Christians.
 - b. The *owner of the vineyard* is symbolic of God the Father.
 - c. The *vineyard-keeper* represents Christ.
3. The expectations of owner are perfectly reasonable:
 - a. Three years earlier, he had planted a fig tree in his vineyard.
 - b. During that time, it had received proper care and nourishment from the caretaker.
 - c. However, after three years, there were still not figs on its branches.
 - d. The owner came to the conclusion that the tree was using up precious soil, water and time.
 - e. Thus he reasoned, “Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?” (v. 7).
4. The vineyard-keeper pleaded for one last opportunity: “Let it alone, sir, for

this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down” (vv. 8-9).

- a. The vineyard-keeper wants the tree to live and bear fruit.
- b. He makes the more costly choice to allow for that possibility.
- c. He offers to dig down and fertilize the root of the tree, in hopes that it might produce fruit.
- d. The owner allows this window of opportunity for the tree to bear fruit.

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B. ITS LESSON

1. Through this parable, Jesus paints for us a picture of the amazing mercy and grace of God.
2. Every single person who has ever lived on this planet was created by a good and merciful God.
3. He is the One who gives us “every good and perfect gift” so that we might live for His purpose and bring glory to Him.
4. We breathe His air, drink His water, eat food which He has provided.
5. However, if we live only for ourselves and our pleasures with no regard for His glory, justice requires that we be cut down and removed.
6. However, because God is “rich in mercy” and “loved us” out of “His great love,” He sent His Son to give us an opportunity to change.
7. Through His death on the cross, He removes our sin which damages our soul.
8. He gives us new soil in which to grow so that we might produce abundant fruit.
9. Why? Because God truly does not want that any of us should perish but come to repentance.

Conclusion

1. When you look closely at this parable which Jesus tells, you can see the owner's heart and resolve — He really doesn't want to remove the tree from His vineyard.
2. However, there is something else which we are not told — the tree's response to the additional year of extra attention on the part of the vineyard-keeper.
3. This isn't the only place where we see this.
 - a. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus never reveals to us the response of the elder brother to his father's plea (*Luke 15:30-31*).
 - b. Simon the Sorcerer (*Acts 8:9-24*), who after becoming a Christian, was rebuked by Peter for attempting to purchase the ability to impart the Holy Spirit to others.
4. In each case the question is left open. We are not told whether or not the true fruit of repentance (change) became evident afterward.
5. As you think about the things we have studied this morning, there are two questions I would like for each of you to ask yourselves:
 - a. Have I truly repented of my sins? Is the fruit of such repentance evident in my life?
 - b. Is my life pleasing to the Lord?
6. If your answer to either of these questions is no, I encourage you to please reconsider where you are in your life.
7. Won't you turn from your sin and choose to follow Christ with all your heart? Today?