

Repent: Let Go And Cling To Jesus

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Luke 13:1-9

In 2005 Hurricane Katrina made landfall in Louisiana ultimately killing over 1800 people and causing over \$125 billion dollars in damage. Some people responded with the attitude: God is punishing New Orleans for their wickedness.

Earlier this year wildfires swept across California killing some and doing over \$100 billion worth of damage. Once again, some people responded with the implication that this was God's judgement on those evil and wicked people.

Jesus addresses exactly this type of attitude in our text this morning. This attitude that points the finger at others and says, "they got what they deserve." Our sinful nature wants to believe that they were sinners worse than us. Our sinful nature wants to take comfort in believing they got what they deserved. Such an attitude appeals to our sinful nature. Jesus makes it clear in our text that such an attitude is wrong.

Rather than taking false comfort in any empty ideologies or excuses, Jesus calls us in our text to repent. He reminds us to let go of any idea that we are any better and cling to the promise of forgiveness and salvation which we have through Jesus Christ our Lord. As our Lenten series is constantly reminding us, empty our hands of everything and cling only to Jesus and his cross for salvation.

Luke 13:1-5 There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? 3 "I tell you, no; 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 sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? 5 "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

The incident that is first brought to Jesus happened to Galileans. The Judeans might easily have assumed that the Galileans got what they deserved. Many Judeans considered Galileans lesser, not as pious. They thought they were better than the Galileans. Remember Nathaniels response, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth." Jesus responds by pointing to an event that happened in Jerusalem to Jerusalemites. His point is simple. You're not better and they are not worse. Rather than judging them you need to repent. Let go of false ideas about yourself and trust in Jesus promise to forgive your sins.

One of the most difficult questions we must deal with as Christians, is why a good and loving God would allow such terrible things to happen. The idea that God is judging them is comforting to us. It gives us a false sense of security believing it won't happen to me because I don't deserve it. It also provides a false answer to that difficult question. God isn't unfair they deserve it.

Jesus' says, "Unless you repent." Repent: that is let go of this false comfort you get from believing yourself better than others and find true comfort in the knowledge that Jesus died for your sins and gives you salvation as free gift.

The bible is clear that death, suffering and tragedy is not a result of their sin, but a result of **our** sin. All have fallen under the curse of sin. No one is more guilty than I am myself. All suffering and tragedy is a reminder that I need to repent.

The question of pain and suffering is only a problem for us, because in our sinfulness we refuse to believe that I truly deserve this. We cannot see ourselves for whom and what we truly are.

Why do bad things happen to good people? There is a false premise in that question. The question wrongly assumes that there are "good people."

Galatians 3:22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Jesus calls us to repent, that is to let go of any false comfort we get from convincing ourselves, that we are better. Rather we turn to Jesus who suffered the punishment that we deserve. He died in our place. The judgement that we deserve has been removed through his death. We will not perish but instead receive the gift of eternal life.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

6-9 He also spoke this parable: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. 7 "Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ` Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' 8 "But he answered and said to him, ` Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. 9 ` And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down."

The gardener shows great patience with the fig tree. The fig tree might easily misinterpret the gardener's extra care. The fig tree might think, "I must be special. I must be better than these other trees."

Repentance means letting go of the idea that because God hasn't struck me with lightning it must be ok, and trusting in Jesus death and the forgiveness that he won.

Romans 2:4-5 4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

As a teacher I can tell you that when students get away with something, they sometimes assume that they will be able to always get away with it. In fact, they sometimes assume that if you let something go once it's unfair if you don't always let it go. As though a teacher's mercy and patience means that they always deserve mercy and patience.

We treat God the same way. We use God's mercy and patience as an excuse to keep on sinning. In this parable Jesus calls on us to repent. That is to let go of the false idea that "God must not care" and cling only to Jesus and his forgiveness.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

God's patience with us and with this world in general is a call to repentance not an excuse to keep on sinning.

Jesus looks to find fruit on the fig tree. Our text makes it quite clear what fruit Jesus is looking for. He is seeking repentance. **"a broken and a contrite heart, these O God you will not despise."** When he doesn't find it he waters and fertilizes the tree to make fruit. We will never learn on our own to be as repentant as we ought to be, but our salvation is not dependent on the level of repentance that we reach. This too is something that we need to let go and trust in Jesus's death and forgiveness.

God's everlasting love is on display in the parable as he is first patient with the tree that does not bear fruit and then even tends to it. In the same way we can be confident that God is dealing with us with the same patience and unending love.

There is no hope in any false belief that we are better, or that they got what they deserve. Rather our hope is in the Lord who made heaven and earth.