

A CALL TO REPENTANCE AND FRUITFULNESS

Scripture: Luke 13:1-9

Life is full of surprises and unexpected tragedies. When disaster strikes—whether natural, personal, or across-the-board—you may ask, “Why did this happen? And living here where hurricanes are a common occurrence could make you wonder why we get them so much? Or why were all those people killed in the tornadoes up north that swept through the center of our country last week?”

It’s like our lesson today where people asked Jesus when Pilate killed all those Galileans while they were offering sacrifices, *were they worse sinners?* It refers to a brutal event when Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, killed a group of Galileans while they were offering sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem. Galileans were often viewed as rebellious. And Pilate may have believed they were involved in some form of resistance making it a political move to intimidate and maintain Roman control. Anyway, the phrase *“mixed their blood with their sacrifices”* describes they were murdered in a sacred setting, possibly during a religious ceremony. And when asked about it, they probably expected Jesus to confirm those victims’ suffered death because of their sins. But He made it very clear. Those Galileans killed by Pilate were **not** worse sinners than anyone else. And He challenged their thinking! *“Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish”* (Luke 13:2-3) meaning, *all people are sinners and in need of repentance.* Without turning away from sin and turning to God, spiritual death is going to happen! And that’s eternal separation from God!

Then He turned to another disaster—the collapse of the tower in Siloam. Eighteen people were killed. He used that tower falling in Jerusalem to challenge the common belief that suffering is always the result of personal sin. Now, that tragedy isn’t recorded anywhere else. So, details about when and why the tower collapsed are unknown. But Siloam is in a district in Jerusalem where the Pool of Siloam is located as part of the city's water system. It was built around the 8th century BC during the reign of King Hezekiah to bring water from the Gihon Spring into the city of Jerusalem to protect the water supply from potential invasions. (2 Kings 20:20, 2 Chronicles 32:30) The pool was used as a water reservoir for the city as well as for ritual cleansing. Gihon Spring is where Solomon was taken by the prophet Nathan and anointed king by Zadok the priest. (1 Kings 1:38-39) A tunnel was carved through solid rock for about 1,750 feet to protect Jerusalem’s water supply from invading Assyrian armies from the East. The tunnel is still accessible today. It’s a genius of ancient engineering. Visitors can explore the Gihon Spring and even walk through it to experience firsthand the ancient cleverness of water management. Some scholars believe a tower could have been part of a Roman construction project on the water system. More likely it was a structure *near* the Pool of Siloam. Anyway, Jesus’ point in mentioning the tower’s collapse was to emphasize, disasters are not necessarily Divine punishment. However, they can serve as a reminder of death and the need for repentance.

So again, Jesus said those who died were not greater sinners than others. He rejected the idea those who died were being punished more than others. In a fallen world, tragedies happen! But when they do, they should lead you to think about your own spiritual condition. And while suffering is painful and often difficult to understand, it’s not necessarily a punishment from God. Jesus calls us to repentance, and faith, and to trust in God’s goodness, knowing He can bring healing and restoration. So here, Jesus urged **everyone** to repent before it's too late. And the real question is not “Why did this happen?” but rather, “Are you ready to meet God?” Everyone needs repentance because life is so uncertain.—Repent while you can! Don’t wait until tragedy strikes to turn to God. Instead of questioning why terrible things happen to others, think about your own spiritual condition. Repentance isn’t just about feeling sorry. It’s about turning away from sin and turning toward God.

Billy Graham always preached about the importance of turning away from sin and turning to God. He emphasized repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and being converted through the Holy Spirit. He frequently said repentance is more than feeling sorry for sin. It’s turning away from sin and being committed to following God. He once said: "Repentance is not just feeling sorry for your sins. It is a complete change of your mind and heart that brings about a change of your action." He said that no matter how deep someone’s sin may be, God’s grace is deep enough to forgive. And he added, "God’s mercy and grace give you the power to turn away from sin and live for Him." He pointed people to Jesus as the only path to salvation when he said, "Being a Christian is more than just a sudden conversion—it’s a daily process whereby you grow to be more and more like Christ." And He urged people not to delay turning from sin. Billy Graham’s invitation was: "You may never have another opportunity to come to Christ. Don’t wait. Come to Jesus, now!"

And our lesson continues when Jesus told a parable about a fig tree. A tree that had not produced fruit for three years. The owner wanted it cut down. But the gardener pleaded for one more year to tend to it, hoping it would bear fruit. If not, then it would be removed.

Now, to understand this parable you have to understand the symbolism: The Fig Tree – represents Israel, as well as you and me. God expects His people to bear spiritual fruit. The Owner – represents God, who looks for righteousness and spiritual growth. The Gardener – represents Jesus pleading for us, giving us time to repent and change. The Fruit – represents the evidence of a transformed life—love, obedience, and good works. The Extra Time – represents God’s mercy and patience, giving us more opportunity to repent. So, how does all this apply to your life? Are you bearing fruit in your faith life? Or are you just taking up space? God is patient. But His patience is not endless. Eventually, judgment will come. And

you must take advantage of the grace and opportunities that God's giving you right now to grow spiritually. Examine your heart. – Of what do you need to repent? And don't delay. Make sure things are right between you and God, *today!* Live a life that bears fruit. That reflects God's love and truth. Because Jesus' message is clear: Repent while there's still time. God is merciful. But don't take His patience for granted. Patience is a gift. Not a guarantee! A transformed life bears fruit.—and if you're not growing and bearing spiritual fruit, you're in danger of being “cut down.”

Responding to God's call with sincere repentance means turning away from sin and turning toward God with a genuine heart. Be honest with yourself. Where have you fallen short? Ask God to reveal any hidden sins in your life. (Psalm 139:23-24) Pray sincerely. Admit your sins to God. (1 John 1:9) Trust that His mercy is greater than your failures. And remember, repentance isn't just feeling sorry. It's a decision for you to change and replace your sinful habits with Godly ones. (Ephesians 4:22-24) Pray every day. Read Scripture to renew your mind. (Romans 12:2) Worship and seek God's presence in your life more than ever before. And make changes where necessary. If your sins have hurt others, seek forgiveness. (Matthew 5:23-24) Surround yourself with Godly support. Connect with believers who encourage you in your spiritual journey with God. (Hebrews 10:25) Have someone who can help you stay on the right path as you walk in obedience and faith. Let repentance be your daily lifestyle. Not just a one-time event.

And be open to God's calling. Whether in ministry, or personal growth, God's call is always an invitation to have a deeper, transformed life. Answer Him with a sincere heart. God's call is His invitation for you to follow Him. To live according to His will. To fulfill the purpose He has for your life. It can take different forms, depending on where He's leading you. The first and most important thing for you to do is to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. (John 3:16, Romans 10:9) He calls everyone to repent. To believe in the Gospel. And receive eternal life. (Acts 17:30) God calls His people to live holy and set-apart lives. (1 Peter 1:15-16) This means turning away from sin and growing in righteousness through the Holy Spirit. It's more than just following rules. God wants to have a personal relationship with you. (Jeremiah 29:13) Every believer is called to serve God, whether in ministry, work, or daily life. (Mark 10:45) This can be through evangelism, helping the needy, or using your talents for His glory. Some people receive a unique call to become pastors, missionaries, or lay leaders. (Jeremiah 1:5) Others are called to serve in business, education, healthcare, or other fields as witnesses for Christ. God calls us to endure life's trials with faith and remain faithful to Him. (James 1:12, 2 Timothy 4:7) To persevere and to trust His plan, even when it's difficult walking in His calling.

But how do you recognize God's call? God will reveal His will for your life through Scripture. In prayer you may hear His voice. And the Holy Spirit convicts, guides, and confirms God's direction. But be aware of this! God opens doors. And God closes doors. He uses counselors, pastors, and fellow believers who, through wise counsel, often help give you understanding. So, are you feeling a specific call from God in your life right now? If you are, it's important to understand and respond with faith. His call can come in different ways. Pay attention to constant feelings, or desires that line up with His will. Examine your heart. Is there an area where God is asking you to surrender, to obey, or to go? If there is, repent of that which may be holding you back from hearing Him loud and clear. And when you take that step of faith remember, God reveals His will one step at a time (Psalm 119:105). Don't wait for everything to be clear. Trust Him as you move forward. Sometimes God's call unfolds over time. Stay faithful. And wherever you are, be open to His leading. Keep serving. Keep growing in your relationship with Him. And if you feel God is calling you right now, what is He asking you to do? Let us pray.

“Lord, we hear Your call to repentance. Help us turn from our sins and walk in Your ways. May our lives bear fruit that brings glory to You. Thank You for Your patience and mercy. We surrender to You today. In Jesus' name, Amen.”