

Unless I Repent?

Luke 13:1-9

Sunday, March 24 2019

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, 'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.'

Jesus responded to a group of people about some Galilean men who were killed by Pilate's soldiers. It is probable that they were themselves killing their sacrifices. It is likely that Pilate's officers came upon them by surprise, just at the time when they were off their guard and murdered them, and so it was said that they mingled the blood of the sacrificers with the blood of the sacrifices. It is a bit of irony that Christ was now going up to Jerusalem, to be delivered into the hands of Pilate, and to have his blood, not mingled with his sacrifice, but itself made a sacrifice. Jesus also spoke of a disaster in Jerusalem that killed 18 people when a tower collapsed

It's important to understand that the victims of Pilate's soldiers and the men who were killed when the tower fell did not die due to God's judgment, as those gathered around Jesus apparently believed. God does nothing out of spite. But

Christ was telling the religious crowd of His day that unless they repented, they would also perish.

Jesus' answer suggests that those who told him of these tragedies believed that, although Pilate was unjust in killing them, without doubt they were secretly bad men, otherwise God would not have permitted Pilate to kill them.

This passage has several excellent lessons for us. The first one teaches us that when someone has trouble beyond the average amount, as many of us often do, we are not to interpret it to mean that they are a greater sinner than others.

Trouble does not always come to a person because of their sins. It would be a good idea to remember this rule: "We cannot judge men's sins by their sufferings in this world; for many are thrown into the furnace as gold to be purified, not as dross and chaff to be consumed." We have enough to do by examining ourselves. Jesus' point was that extreme sinfulness is not demonstrated by whether or not someone is tragically killed.

The other side of the coin is that just becoming a Christian does not automatically make us immune to trouble. We will have salvation, but we will not have a life free of misfortune just because we are Christians.

Another thing we can see is that when trouble comes to other people, and not to us, it does not mean that we are superior to those people. Perhaps God is permitting us to see those other people's troubles in order to bring us closer to Him.

How easy it is to see others' tragedies and fail to learn the lessons they teach! The big question is not "Why do people die in tragic and seemingly meaningless

ways?” but “Why does God keep me alive?” Are we truly worthy? Are we bearing fruit? Or are we just taking up space?

This passage further implies that we all deserve to perish as much as they do and, had we been dealt with according to our sins, our blood would have been mingled with our sacrifices long ago, by the justice of God.

It also implies that repentance is the way to escape perishing, and it is a sure way so that iniquity will not be our ruin, but salvation is available upon no other terms.

And, finally that, if we do not repent, we will certainly perish, as others have done before us.

Jesus must have held the people's attention on that day, because he spoke about something that was in the news, and being discussed by many in the crowd.

So let's take a moment to kind of re-enact that conversation that Jesus had with the people gathered around Him. Let's talk about the news.

Recently, as I am sure you all know, there was a shooting at a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand, a shooting that took the lives of fifty Muslims during their worship.

Does the way that they were killed, at the hand of a man who was filled with fear and hate, mean that they were worse sinners than any other Muslims or, for that matter, anybody else throughout the world.

NO! But, according to what we read just a few moments ago, unless I repent, surely, I too will perish.

If we read a little further into the papers or watch for a few more moments on the evening news, we will learn about one hundred twenty Christians who have been executed in Nigeria over a three week period in late February/early March.

Am I to assume that those people were somehow not Christian enough to be spared such horrible deaths? That perhaps they had done something that was un-Christian and thus offended a local official, thereby causing him to unleash his wrath upon them?

NO! But, unless I repent, surely, I too will perish.

Perhaps I am to assume that the Muslims, who were killed at the Mosque in Christchurch, deserved what they got, in retaliation for the deaths of the Christians in Nigeria at the hands of Muslim militants?

ABSOLUTELY NOT! But, unless I repent, surely, I too will perish. And remember, Jesus calls on us to love our enemies, to turn the other cheek.

Now, you might be thinking, “that’s all well and good but those things are happening half way around the globe. What does that have to do with us?”

Well, since you put it that way, let’s take a look a little closer to home.

At the last estimate, in January of 2018, there were approximately 12,500 people living either on the streets or in homeless shelters in the Seattle, Washington area. That’s a little over 1 percent of the population of the city with 169 deaths due to exposure or malnutrition in 2017.

In San Francisco the number of homeless persons is estimated to be 7,500. Just a little under 1 percent of the population, with 132 deaths in 2017.

So, are those homeless people worse sinners than everyone else the nation? To be sure, some of them must have made choices that resulted in their current situation. That certainly means that they deserve their suffering, right?

NO! But, unless I repent, surely, I too will suffer.

“But Keith” you say “that’s way out on the West coast”.

Ok, a little closer to home. Who has heard about the flooding in the Midwest?

The current count stands at 10 dead with property damage and lost farm revenue that, at this point, is uncountable.

We already know the answer but I’m gonna ask anyway. Are those people in the Midwest worse sinners than we, here in the UP are.

Obviously not. But, unless I repent, I too will perish.

Folks, right here in our own city of Ironwood, people are suffering and dying. Some from disease, some from horrible accidents, others from violence or addiction.

Are they worse sinners than everyone else in our town.

No, but unless we repent, surely, we too shall perish.

The same Jesus that calls for us to repent because the kingdom of heaven is at hand, bids us repent because otherwise we shall perish; so that he has set before us life and death, good and evil, and He asks us to make our choice.

We can choose to repent and bear fruit or we can choose to continue as we always have and be cut down.

