

Luke 13:1-9; II Peter 3:8-10; Why Do Bad Things Happen? I. Present Day Suffering II. Future Suffering III. Present Day Fruit

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, a question that many people have asked is this- "Why do bad things happen?" People want some reason- something to avoid- in order to be free from pain. In order to answer that question, we need to define our terms. What makes a situation bad- and what does that situation say about us? Today we will also learn to take a broad picture approach to events before we can speak to that question. Over the past weeks in Luke 12 we have considered Jesus' focus on the end times and the judgement that is to come. Last week we were told to discern the times- to be wise concerning the day and age in which we live- because the time is well spent! The sun is going down and the Day of Judgement is close at hand. We are on our way to the courthouse- so seek peace- seek to be reconciled with God before you arrive! Today Jesus continues His focus on the end times- put in the context of present-day suffering. We consider this theme: Jesus Christ teaches that since present day suffering is not an indicator of man's relation to God, we must all repent today!

### **I. Present Day Suffering**

Our passage opens with two historical examples of suffering and death. The first example given in v. 1 is where a certain group of men- Galileans- were at the temple offering their sacrifice. Pilate had his soldiers strike them down on the spot- and their blood was mixed with the blood of their sacrifices. They must have been really bad if God would have allowed them to be killed in the temple- right? And those 18 who were crushed in v. 4. To die in such a seemingly random way- near the pool of Siloam which was supposed to be a place of cleansing and purification. To be chosen by God to die in such a horrific way! That says something about their life- right? Well- no actually. Jesus makes it clear that tragedies and physical ailments are not all linked to personal sin. As we found in our theme- present day suffering is not an indicator of man's relation to God. For example, consider Job who underwent such pain and loss- while remaining upright and righteous. God was pleased with him! And Joseph- who experienced such unjust suffering in Egypt and prison- even evil from the hands of his brothers- but as Genesis 50 concludes- God meant it for good. So the summary of this matter is clear- difficult, hard and trying times can befall the righteous and come upon the godly; while times of ease and pleasure can be

experienced by the wicked! The fact is, we cannot always draw a straight line between an individual sin and a present-day situation of suffering. Sometimes- yes- there is a correlation. As in the days of Noah and the flood- or when a drunk driver gets sent to jail- actions have consequences. But more often than not, a trial comes with no link to a person's action. Just think of John 9- a man was born blind and Jesus' disciples assumed- either this guy sinned in the womb or his parents sinned to cause this blindness. But Jesus says- no- his blindness is simply an opportunity for me to display the Works of God! When someone in this life experiences pain, suffering or loss, we cannot say- he is simply getting what he deserves. It is not our call, we do not know his heart no do we know God's plan. We need not think too far back to remember what some celebrities said after the hurricane hit Texas- that the reason Texans were suffering is because they voted for Pres. Trump. Even some Christians said that the reason Puerto Rico was hit by hurricane Maria was because Puerto Ricans were practicing Voodoo. Truly there is nothing new under the sun. Fallen man likes to think that others suffer because they are such wicked people- but when they are the ones suffering their tunes change! Jesus makes it clear- we are not to judge a person's spiritual based on what happens to them! And the fact remains, God is sovereign in and overall. Nothing happens by chance! He ordains all that comes to be. Trials for a Christian are not a foretaste of punishment to come, but rather the loving discipline of a Father. Even as the life of Jesus perfectly illustrates, you can suffer while remaining righteous! So difficult times can come upon the godly, while times of ease may be enjoyed by the wicked. But that is not the end of the matter.

## **II. Future Suffering**

No, as Jesus continues in v. 3 and again at the end of v. 5- unless you repent you will all perish! There is a lesson to learn from the present-day suffering! Any suffering we see today is but a brief, passing picture- a glimpse into the painful suffering that will be experienced by many in the future! Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish! The word for "perish" here is "apollimi" meaning that you will certainly be destroyed, ruined and brought into despair. The fact is, there is an eternity in hell- a state of everlasting misery, punishment and death. You will all perish unless you flee the coming wrath- and find peace with God through the crucified Savior

Jesus Christ! If you do not repent, whatever pain or suffering you may see or experience in this life- will pail in comparison to the suffering you will then experience! Once again, Jesus is making it clear that there is a hell- a place of intense suffering- that will be experienced by many! Whatever state of pain we can imagine in this world- as cancer or gangrene that consumed the body- decay and rot of the teeth, eyes, muscles and bones. Those who refuse to repent will be cast into such a place as this! They are choosing future suffering! As Isaiah 66 describes it, God will bring their fears upon them. Whatever a person's worst nightmares are- these will be experienced! They will enter into judgment- a place where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. As the gospels say- a place of weeping, gnashing of teeth and outer darkness. Although it is true that every situation of suffering is not directly linked to a person's sinful action, it is also true that every tragic event- every situation of despair and pain- is a constant reminder that a day of Judgment and Wrath is coming! And for those who refuse to repent, whatever suffering they undergo is in fact a foretaste of the pain and tribulation that is yet to come! When Jesus says to many- away from Me, I never knew you. For them, their eternity will be one of ever-increasing pain with no reprieve! So take this lesson to heart- bad things do not just happen to bad people- the fact is we are all sinners who deserve worse than we receive today! Present day storms are sent from a sovereign and holy God who is constantly reminding us- repent for the day of Judgment is at hand! So flee the coming wrath!

### **III. Present Day Fruit**

In order to flee this wrath, Jesus calls us to repent in v. 3 and 5. This is the fruit that was needed in v. 7. What then is godly repentance that leads to life? Well- the word repentance is "Metanoah"- meaning a change in mind and direction. To repent is to hate past sins, turn away from them and to turn to the Lord! A change on the path- now fleeing from sin and running to the Lord in faith and obedience! To repent is to acknowledge your sin- and to seek peace with God through the blood of Jesus Christ! Well, after this strong statement made in v. 5, Jesus gives us a brief parable to prove the need for repentance once again. The parable given in v. 6 is really applying what Jesus has already stated- making its point by pressing it on our mind by way of a picture. The

point is this- repent while it is still day- repent while there is still time- while you are still in transit! Because the Judge is standing at the door- ready to return like a thief in the night. The day of reckoning is found in v. 8- after 3 years of looking for fruit there is the threat given- this tree has one more year! The fact is, Jesus gives us and humanity as a whole time to repent. That is what we read of in II Peter 3- The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise, rather He is patient! The reason that the day of Judgment has not occurred is because Jesus is giving us time to repent- the current age progresses as one long opportunity to find life in Jesus Christ! So Jesus gives the tree one more year- ample time to produce the fruit of repentance! In speaking to the Jews of his day, Jesus gave them some 30 years during His life- and then another 30 after Pentecost! A time of delay- a time for fruit- but since they refused the Roman army returned in 70 AD and chopped the fig tree down and burned it up. But this applies to us as well, if we do not produce fruit we too will be chopped down- the ax is already at the root of the tree! The need for- and command to repent- is so clear!

But stubborn and rebellious man continues to play on God's patience- and they refuse to see the writing on the wall. Listen to Heb. 6:7- for the land that has drunk in the rain that falls on it but bears no fruit- rather bears thorns and thistles- is near to being cursed and its end is to be burned. If you taking in God's gifts- but don't produce fruit- your end will be destruction! The application is clear, we all need to repent- today! Now, and not tomorrow. In fact, the life of a Christian is one characterized by continual repentance! Not a one-time thing, but a daily turning away from sin and turning unto the Lord in faith! Do not presume on God's kindness- don't imagine that God will always delay and postpone the judgment. One day soon- when people are assuming peace and prosperity destruction will fall upon them. The fact that all evil men are not punished now does not mean that God approves of their actions! So repent and believe in Jesus Christ, and you will be spared! A way out- a source of life is freely offered to you! Repent and believe and you will be saved!

To conclude, today we have seen that Jesus Christ teaches that present day suffering is not an indicator of man's relation to God. But the call still remains, we must all repent! When we look around us, we see not only God's patience, but also a constant reminder that the end is coming! So repent, or you will perish!