

Notes for Next Sunday

Third Sunday in Lent

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Ezekiel 33:7-20). Jerusalem had fallen to Babylon. The nation of Judah was no longer an independent political entity. Therefore, as a watchman, Ezekiel was to now focus the people's attention on their relationship with God. God is calling Ezekiel to preach repentance to Judah so that they will repent. It is always God's will that no one should perish because of their sins but repent and be saved. This theme is found throughout the whole lesson.

Epistle (1 Corinthians 10:1-13). The Corinthian's were inclined to wander into sexual sins and easily worship other gods. Paul recalls for them some history of the Children of Israel when they were in the desert. Israel had soon forgotten the great miracle that God had performed for them to escape Egypt. They quickly turned to idol worship. Paul points out that many of the Israelites died in the desert before the nation reached the Promise Land. Then Paul shifts gears a little. He reminds the Corinthians about being fooled into self-security and fall into temptation. He ends with the promise that God will provide a way overcome temptation when it afflicts them.

Gospel (Luke 13:1-9). This passage begins the second part of Jesus' response to the crowds that began in 12:54-59. This second part (13:1-21) encompasses a call to repentance (13:1-9), Jesus' second Sabbath controversy (13:10-17), and two parables of the kingdom (13:18-21). The themes of judgment and repentance (Law and Gospel) run through both 12:54-59 and 13:1-9. In this reading, both judgment and forgiveness for the penitent are evident in the two separate but related segments, 13:1-5 (the blood of the Galileans and the tower of Siloam) and 13:6-9 (the parable of the fig tree).

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

OLD TESTAMENT – Ezekiel 33:7-20

⁷“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. ⁸When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. ⁹But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself. ¹⁰“Son of man, say to the house of Israel, ‘This is what you are saying: “Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of them. How then can we live?”’ ¹¹Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?’ ¹²“Therefore, son of man, say to your countrymen, ‘The righteousness of the righteous man will not save him when he disobeys, and the wickedness of the wicked man will not cause him to fall when he turns from it. The righteous man, if he sins, will not be allowed to live because of his former righteousness.’ ¹³If I tell the righteous man that he will surely live, but then he trusts in his righteousness and does evil, none of the righteous things he has done will be remembered; he will die for the evil he has done. ¹⁴And if I say to the wicked man, ‘You will surely die,’ but he then turns away from his sin and does what is just and right— ¹⁵if he gives back what he took in pledge for a loan, returns what he has stolen, follows the decrees that give life, and does no evil, he will surely live; he will not die. ¹⁶None of the sins he has committed will be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he will surely live. ¹⁷“Yet your countrymen say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ But it is their way that is not just. ¹⁸If a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, he will die for it. ¹⁹And if a wicked man turns away from his

wickedness and does what is just and right, he will live by doing so. ²⁰ Yet, O house of Israel, you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ But I will judge each of you according to his own ways.”

33:8 hold you accountable. If the prophet does not warn the wicked of God’s judgment, he will still die in his guilt, but the prophet also will share a responsibility for the wicked’ death. Does this mean the prophet will also die? It would if his neglect were an indication of his unbelief. But most likely here it is to be interrupted in the sense that Paul speaks of neglect and unfaithful works of a servant of God being burned away in God’s judgment, though the prophet himself will be saved (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). This interpretation, however, is not to lessen the severity of the warning stated in this verse. (Concordia Journal – July, 1987)

33:10 Our offenses and sins. The first time the exiles expressed consciousness of sin. Previously they had blamed their fathers (18:2) and even God (18:19, 25). (CSB)

33:17-20 The unbeliever is damned because of his unrighteous acts. However, a wicked man who repents and believes is justified forensically through faith, which is active in works of love (Gal 5:6), and none of his sins is remembered on Judgment Day. (CC)

EPISTLE – 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. ²They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. ³They all ate the same spiritual food ⁴and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. ⁶Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. ⁷Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.” ⁸We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. ⁹We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. ¹⁰And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. ¹¹These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. ¹²So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! ¹³No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

10:1 all. The word “all” occurs five times in 10:1–4 and receives emphasis throughout the section. The whole nation received God’s grace. Paul first makes the point that *all* received these benefits *objectively*—all who passed through the sea and ate and drank in the wilderness.

10:2 baptized.† A figure used to depict their submission to Moses as their deliverer and leader, just as Christian baptism, essentially a means of grace, also depicts the believer’s submission to Christ as Savior and Lord. (CSB)

10:3–4 spiritual food ... spiritual drink. The manna and the water from the rock are used as figures representing the spiritual sustenance that God continually provides for his people (CSB)

10:5 God was not pleased with most of them. Not all the Israelites were unfaithful; so, too, not all the Corinthians are in danger of losing the prize, only those who destroy the faith of others.

10:10 destroying angel. Paul links the angel who brought the plague of Nu 16:46–50—because of the grumbling of the Israelites against Moses and Aaron (Nu 16:41)—with the destroying angel of Ex 12:23. (CSB)

GOSPEL – Luke 13:1-9

Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. ² Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? ³ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.” ⁶ Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. ⁷ So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’ ⁸” “Sir,” the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’”

The mixing of the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices was a heinous crime. The best explanation for such a bizarre sequence is the Passover context, for it provides the only occasion for laypeople to sacrifice in the temple precincts. Pilate violated all holiness codes by sending his troops into the temple area to murder Galilean Jews while they were slaughtering their lambs for the Passover Seder. During this holy feast the blood of these Jews was mixed with the blood of the lambs. (CC p. 533)

13:2, 4 worse sinners ... more guilty. Many thought that tragedies happened to people as divine punishments for specific sins. (TLSB)

Jesus says that these particular incidents of suffering and tragedy are not signs of God’s judgment on individuals, but of his wrath against all sinful mankind. The signs of this time say that you are on the way to appear before the judge (12:54-59). And present on that journey is Jesus and his messianic ministry of proclaiming the kingdom of God. All must repent and believe that the kingdom has come in Jesus. (CC p. 534)

13:4 the tower in Siloam. The tower of Siloam was in Jerusalem, so those killed in this incident were probably Judeans. The histories of the northern and southern regions were such that a Jewish audience might assume that Galileans were more likely to be punished by God than Judeans. Tragic accidents can strike anyone, anywhere; none, including God’s people (faithful or unfaithful) are exempt. The Galileans could well have been faithful pilgrims offering sacrifice in Jerusalem according to God’s own instructions in the Torah, but that would not necessarily prevent suffering and tragedy from coming their way. (CC pp. 531-532)

13:6 fig tree. This unproductive tree symbolizes Jews who were not producing the fruit of faith. (TLSB)

13:7 The owner symbolizes God; the vinedresser represents a religious leader. (TLSB)

13:7 For three years. Very patient, giving his plant every opportunity to produce fruit. (TLSB)