

Repent and Believe

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Third Sunday in Lent) is Luke 13:1-9. Our reading has two parts. Verses 1-5 are about people in the audience wanting to know if people who suffered brutally were really bad sinners. Verses 6-9 have to do with nurturing of a barren fig tree. Both have the theme of repentance and fruit of repentance.

The mixing of the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices was a heinous crime. 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. They may have falsely concluded that if nothing really bad happens to them in life, it is a sign that they have been living good lives and will be saved because of their good life.

Jesus tells of another incident at the tower of 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. The northern region had a longer and more pronounced history of apostasy. Jesus' reply, citing Judeans, could imply that Galileans and Judeans were equally sinful in God's estimation.

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. All must repent and believe that the kingdom has come in Jesus.

Jesus' parable of the fig tree supports his call to repentance by illustrating how God will be patient—for a little while longer—with a community that does not yield the fruit of repentance. The focus is on whether there will be fruit (repentance) before removal (destruction in the final judgment.) God's fore-bearing patience is meant to give them opportunity to repent. *For three years* is a period of ample opportunity. This is reflected in 2 Peter 3:9 "*The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you,^[a] not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*"

Today, many fail to live their lives according to God's will. The One who commands us to such works also bestows His Spirit. He enables us to repent and to produce the fruit that flow from His salvation.

Prayer: Lord, show me the shortness of my time and the nearness of eternity, so I do not fail to redeem the time. Amen. (TLSB)