

Lent 3 3/24/19
Luke 13:1-5 C

There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

You do good for God, God will do good for you. You do bad for God, watch out, God is going to strike you down; He will get even with you; punish you, right? In the folly of our human reason, we think God deals with us according to our works. This Sunday, Jesus corrects that teaching. God does not deal with us according to our works, He deals with us in grace, grace in Jesus Christ.

We are by nature works righteous. We believe that we deserve God’s favor and blessing for the nice things we do. On the other side of the coin, we believe that bad things happen to people as punishment, punishment for doing bad. It is this thinking that we hear in our Gospel reading today.

As Jesus traveled to Jerusalem, some people came up to Him and told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. It seems these Galileans were protesting in Jerusalem that the Romans had taken everything, including their homeland. The Romans saw these Galileans as out and out insurgents against Rome. These Galileans were Jews, so they went up to offer sacrifices and as they were doing that, they were killed and their blood mingled with the blood of their sacrifices.

Jesus answers them with a question, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they

suffered in this way (v. 2)?” We answer: Ya, must be. The worst sinners get the worst punishments, right? These guys sinned, mainly against the 4th Commandment, and they sinned big time, so they were punished big time by God. Notice how Jesus corrects that thinking of the sinful flesh, “No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

And just so you don’t miss that point, Jesus brings up the story of the tower in Siloam that fell and killed eighteen people. “Do you think they were worse offenders than all the others who live in Jerusalem (v. 4)?” The last time sinful humanity tried to build a tower to God, He confused their language and scattered them across the face of the earth. They didn’t learn, so eighteen people are killed. Worse sinners get the worst punishment, right? That’s what we like to think. But, Jesus once again corrects our thinking, “No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

Our biggest problem is that we think of sin – OUR SIN – lightly. We have “ok” sins – we all do that, so it’s no big deal. There are “bad” sins – yes, you’ve done a few of those along the way, but just a few. Then, then, there are those “grievous” sins – those really, really bad one sins: homosexuality, school shootings, the religion of Islam.

Question 78 in *Luther’s Small Catechism* teaches us: What is sin? Sin is every thought, desire, word, and deed which is contrary to God’s Law.

If you look lustfully to someone who is not our spouse, you are just as guilty of breaking the 6th Commandment as the homosexual. If you are angry with your neighbor and refuse to forgive and be reconciled, you are just as guilty of breaking the 5th Commandment as the person who ends their neighbor’s physical life in murder. If something bad happens and you

are filled with self-pity and lament, “Why are you doing this God? I don’t deserve this!” refusing to believe that God works good in all things, you are just as guilty of breaking the 3rd Commandment as the Muslim who does not believe God’s Word. Do I need to go on?

Every time we think the worst sinners get the worst punishment, Jesus comes along and says, “No!” That’s not the way it works.

Jesus is teaching the truth, but a very unpopular truth. The mirror of the Law shows us that we are not, by nature, good people. The Bible says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Ro 3:23).” “All” – that’s you. We are all equally sinful before God. No one, not one of us, deserves God’s grace and favor. That’s what you yourself confessed this morning, “I...confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment.”

The folly of our sinful thinking shows itself in that question we like to ask, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” When we ask that question, we are not even asking the right question. Faith asks, “Why do good things happen to bad people?” The GOOD NEWS of the Christian faith is that God does not does not treat us as our sins deserve. You deserve only punishment, death, and eternal condemnation. But, our **LENTEN BANNER** proclaims the Good News: No greater love does God have for you than to send His only-begotten Son who laid down His life for you.

Here’s the marvelous thing about the Gospel: all have sinned and all will perish in death as the wages of those sins, but Jesus died for all the world, for all. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, which means He went to Calvary’s cross carrying the sins of all people, of all times, and all place (cf. John 1:29). There upon that cross, He bled and

died for all. And, the 3rd day God the Father raised Him to life again, proving that the Father accepted His Son's sacrifice for the reconciliation of all the world.

It is this Resurrected Christ who comes you and says, "Repent! Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish (v. 5)." Dr. Luther writes in the very first of His 95 Thesis: The Christian life is the life of repentance. Repentance is sorrow for our sin and faith that God forgives us for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance is not something you do – a choice you make, a decision you come to. Repentance is God the Holy Spirit's work in you. At the font of your baptism, at His Table, in hearing and learning the Word of God, God the Holy Spirit forgives you your sin, works faith in you and creates spiritual life in you so that you overcome sin each and every day, and trust, rejoice, and find comfort in Jesus.