

“Standing Before God” – Pr Jim Sprenkle – Lent 3 – March 20, 2022

- I. **Luke 13:3 & 5** – As Jesus asks whether the Galileans or the tower of Siloam victims were worse sinners... and the response, “No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”
- II. **We all have that one story...**
 - a. You know, the person who went through some terrible experience... and we just can't figure out why it had to happen to them.
 - i. Why do bad things happen to good people?
 - ii. Sometimes it's a young mother who loses a child...
 - iii. Sometimes it's a disease that comes out of nowhere and causes all kinds of pain and suffering...
 - iv. Maybe it's a random accident that takes a loved one from us.
 - b. On the other hand, we sometimes wonder if certain people aren't getting punished for their past sins.
 - i. For example, when Jeffrey Dahmer the mass murderer was killed in prison, most people just shrugged their shoulders and figured he got what he deserved...
 - ii. Or when a terrorist responsible for the deaths of innocent people gets cancer and dies, people assume God decided to take him out.
 - iii. Or maybe when a corrupt politician gets swindled and loses his life savings, we don't question why this bad thing happened, we assume that he deserved it for being such a rotten guy.
 - c. For some reason, we feel the need to judge the trials and difficulties in our lives and the lives of others.
 - i. Is this a trial that came to me because I did wrong in God's eyes?
 - ii. Is my neighbor going through this tough time because they did something wrong?
 - d. And even worse, we might turn to God and ask, “Who do You think You are, putting people through all this pain and suffering?”
 - i. Many refuse to believe in God because they can't believe a good God would allow all this terrible stuff to happen.
 - ii. Others are angry at God for not stopping bad things, or that they went through a lot more trouble than others had to endure.
 - e. So, we might ask why, we might assume to know, or we might blame God for the bad things that happen...
- III. **Jesus is teaching a crowd that wants to know why.**
 - a. They bring up a tragedy that happened.
 - i. The way it's worded in the Greek seems to indicate that the Galileans killed by Pontius Pilate and the Judeans killed by the tower falling on them were not just random people but known by those in the crowd.
 - ii. So, what happened Jesus? Were they sinners who got what they deserved?

1. In the ancient world, it was common to believe that bad things happened to those who had personal sin – that God was carrying out His justice.
- b. The Galileans were probably killed during the Passover in Jerusalem.
 - i. I read a modern equivalent from Ken Bailey that said it was like saying, “They came into the church with their machine guns and gunned down the faithful *in the very act of participating in [communion]! The blood of the worshipers was mingled with the holy wine on the altar! NOW WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT?!¹*”
 - ii. How could such a horrible thing happen to good Galileans?
 - iii. In response, Jesus seems unfazed, just saying that no one is good – not even you all in front of Me... so repent.
- c. Jesus then brings up the Judeans who were crushed by the falling tower in Jerusalem... probably good and faithful Jews.
 - i. Just like the first example... How could such a bad thing happen to good Jews?
 - ii. Again, the response from Jesus is that no one is good – not even you all standing in front of Me right now – so repent.
- d. Rather than speculate on why bad things happened to those people... Jesus brings it back around to *us*.
 - i. We all deserve punishment and death... because of the sin in us, we have no standing before God.
 - ii. No, we didn’t start this whole thing – that was Adam and Eve as the first sin came into the world, but every human being thereafter was conceived in sin and brokenness.
 1. Romans 3:23 says, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
 2. Romans 5:12 says, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.”
 3. 1 John 1:8 says, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”
 4. Romans 3:10-12 says, “¹⁰ None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”
- e. Jesus changes the focus from so-called “good” people to the fact that everyone needs to repent and turn back to God.

IV. **Repent and come back home to Jesus.**

- a. We may want to look for all the reasons why bad things happen, but it’s actually pretty simple.
 - i. Bad things happen because sin entered the world through Adam and Eve.

- ii. The bad things... the tragedies, the death and disease, the wars and natural disasters... these are all things that flow naturally out of sin.
 - b. What Jesus is telling the crowd 2000 years ago, and us today, is that we should look at these tell-tale signs of sin, death and the devil in the world and use them as the motivation to cry out in trust to God and repent!
 - i. These signs should not create questions and finger pointing, but bad things should create repentance and trust
 - ii. Instead of saying, "They must have deserved what they got..." We should be saying, "I deserve the same based on my own sin"... AND thank You Jesus for dying for my sin and offering me forgiveness and eternal life!
 - c. Although sin, death and the devil come to steal and kill and destroy, Jesus came so that we might have abundant life! (John 10:10)
 - i. Every single bad thing that happens should be a reminder that our Savior died for us – lived through the suffering and struggle – and knows what our pain feels like – and offers us the victory beyond it all.
 - ii. He went to the cross not because He had to, but because He loved us enough that He couldn't leave us in the hopelessness of sin.
 - d. As we believe, as we trust in Him alone, our questions about assigning blame change to gratitude for a God with steadfast love, patient enough to forgive even us.
- V. **The parable of the fig tree reminds us that God is incredibly patient.**
- a. He waits for us to bear the fruit of repentance, or turn back home to Jesus and live for Him.
 - b. You see, when we are led to repent, something important comes forth...Fruit.
 - c. Fruit that oftentimes counteracts the tragedy and sin in the world by helping people in their times of need.
 - d. Fruit that comes with the humility of knowing we are not better than others, just people who also fall short of God's glory.
 - e. Fruit that reaches out to God in times of great trial, remembering God's own words, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." (Psalm 50:15)
 - f. And finally, fruit uses all circumstances in our lives to bring glory to God and point all people to the abundant life we have in Jesus.
- VI. **No one wants to go through tragedy and trials.**
- a. We cannot avoid them while we live in a broken world...
 - b. However, we also have a much better way to go through these times – in repentance and belief.
 - c. Our standing before God is now changed because of our Savior Jesus.
 - d. In fact, you stand... forgiven. Amen

¹ Bailey, Kenneth, *Through Peasant Eyes*, Erdmann's Publishing Co. (1980).