

THE HARDEST PART

That's a Great Question

SERMON NOTES
MARCH 23, 2025

*The Third Sunday in Lent
Scripture: Luke 13:1-9*

LUKE 13:1-9 (THE MESSAGE)

¹⁻⁵About that time some people came up and told him about the Galileans Pilate had killed while they were at worship, mixing their blood with the blood of the sacrifices on the altar. Jesus responded, "Do you think those murdered Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans? Not at all. Unless you turn to God, you, too, will die. And those eighteen in Jerusalem the other day, the ones crushed and killed when the Tower of Siloam collapsed and fell on them, do you think they were worse citizens than all other Jerusalemites? Not at all. Unless you turn to God, you, too, will die."

⁶⁻⁷Then he told them a story: "A man had an apple tree planted in his front yard. He came to it expecting to find apples, but there weren't any. He said to his gardener, 'What's going on here? For three years now I've come to this tree expecting apples and not one apple I have found. Chop it down! Why waste good ground with it any longer?'

⁸⁻⁹"The gardener said, 'Let's give it another year. I'll dig around it and fertilize, and maybe it will produce next year; if it doesn't, then chop it down.'"

The right question is about God (God's nature and character) and about our relationship with God (creatures, condemned short of grace) ... the answer is repentance and acceptance!

I. "THEOLOGY OR THEODICY?"

- A. The question is as old as humankind, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" And, where and what is God's place amid such suffering (Theodicy)?
- B. It is this question that is on the minds of those who come telling Jesus about Pilate's slaughter of a group of Galileans whose blood he had mingled with their sacrifice.
- C. Jesus seizes the opportunity to emphasize his warnings that the coming judgment would be inescapable, except for those who will turn to God!
- D. Jesus does this by confronting the popular wisdom and Deuteronomistic (Old Covenant) theology that the good prosper, the wicked suffer, and the common assumption that sin is the cause of calamity.
- E. Jesus twice asks those inquiring, "Do you think that these (Galileans, or the eighteen Jerusalemites upon whom the tower of Siloam fell) are worse sinners than all others?"
- F. And twice he tells them, "Not at all. Unless you turn to God, you, too, will die!"
- G. Jesus exposes the fallacy of such reasoning and drives home the point that life is uncertain, death is unpredictable, and judgment is inevitable!

II. "WHAT KIND OF GOD DO YOU KNOW?"

- A. The question is as old as humankind, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" And, where and what is God's place amid such suffering (Theodicy)?

- B. It is this question that is on the minds of those who come telling Jesus about Pilate's slaughter of a group of Galileans whose blood he had mingled with their sacrifice.
- C. Jesus seizes the opportunity to emphasize his warnings that the coming judgment would be inescapable, except for those who will turn to God!
- D. Jesus does this by confronting the popular wisdom and Deuteronomistic (Old Covenant) theology that the good prosper, the wicked suffer, and the common assumption that sin is the cause of calamity.
- E. Jesus twice asks those inquiring, "Do you think that these (Galileans, or the eighteen Jerusalemites upon whom the tower of Siloam fell) are worse sinners than all others?"
- F. And twice he tells them, "Not at all. Unless you turn to God, you, too, will die!"
- G. Jesus exposes the fallacy of such reasoning and drives home the point that life is uncertain, death is unpredictable, and judgment is inevitable!

What questions do you have for Jesus?

How do you understand why bad things happen to good people?

How much of our faith and belief is built around thinking that the good are rewarded and the bad are punished by God?

How do we reconcile being recipients of God's grace through Jesus Christ and being accountable for our sins and our response to God's gift?

How do you understand Jesus' parable of the fruit tree?