

“EXCEPT YE REPENT”

Luke 13:1-5

Intro: We all are keenly aware of the tragic situation in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama which has occupied our attention for the past week. Authorities tell us that this is the worst situation that has ever taken place in our country. We don't have anything in our past history as a nation which can even begin to compare with it. It has affected more people over a greater portion of our country and resulting in the death of more people than ever before. The dead are still being counted so we do not yet know what the total loss of life will be, but it will be in the thousands! Families have been separated and many do not know if those members of their families which they cannot find are lost and will be eventually be found, or if they are dead. The very size and extent and ultimate cost of this tragedy, makes it imperative that we all take this as a message, a personal message, to ourselves. Thousands who have lived through this tragedy will never be the same again, and for those of us who have seen on TV what has happened, we, too, will never forget what we have seen and heard.

Those of us who know the Lord realize that an event of this magnitude has a message, an extremely important message, which we must not overlook. Many have termed this event “a wake up call.” That is certainly true, but the question is, who has made this call. Are we to think that this is just a freakish act of nature, perhaps what a lot of people call “Mother Nature”? Or does the significance of these days we are still going through, go far beyond most of the explanations that have been given to us thus far?

We here at Trinity Bible Church believe very certainly that there is a God. We believe that He has given us the book which everyone knows as the Bible. We believe that God guided the writers of Scripture so that the book what they have given us is actually the Word of God. There were some forty writers of the various parts of the Bible, who lived over a period of some fifteen or sixteen hundred years, and thus it was impossible that they all could have known each other and have planned to write the Bible the way it is. And yet there is an amazing unity to the Bible which cannot be explained or understood in any way except by the way the writers of Scripture explain it. For example, the Apostle Peter, who is responsible for two of the books contained in the Bible, said in writing his second epistle that “no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpreta-

tion,” or origin, that it did not come “in old time by the will of man,” but that “men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:20, 21). The verb moved means *carried along*, or *moved along*, just like the wind would move a ship on the sea. So Peter was saying that the Bible was not a work of man, but that it is the word of the Holy Spirit as He guided those who wrote the various books of the Bible.

The Apostle Paul agreed with Peter. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul charged Timothy to “preach the Word.” That is, he was emphasizing with Timothy what they must have talked about many times before, that his job as a servant of the Lord was to preach and teach what God has given us in His Word. The Apostle Paul declared to Timothy how we got the Bible. You will find his words in the last two verses of chapter 3 in 2 Timothy. This is what Paul told Timothy:

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

So there is no other book in all of the world that is like the Bible. It is called *a revelation* because God has revealed in it things about Himself, and about us, and about the earth, and about heaven, that we would never know, and could never have discovered, if God had not given us His book.

I think that it is very significant, even providential, that this very Sunday morning in our Sunday School we began the study of the first book of the Bible. It is not only the beginning book, it is the foundational book of all of the Bible. And it begins with these words: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” It tells us that this world did not just happen, it did not evolve, it is the work of an Almighty, infinitely wise God. It tells us where we came from. We did not evolve from lower forms of life; man was created as the very crown of God’s creation. He was created *in the image of God!* God created man and all of creation for His glory. All of creation was designed for God’s glory. In Psalm 19 King David wrote,

1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork.

When you go out on a cloudless night and look at the moon and the stars and all of the heavenly bodies, they were made by God, and they were

made for His glory. No man can do what God has done. And what God has done could never have happened by itself. All of the world, all that is in it, and all of the universe, are the work of God. There is no other true explanation of the world. All other explanations are totally irrational, and therefore wrong. And the more we learn about this universe of ours, the more we ought to realize that it never could have just happened, it never could have evolved. God made it all, and those who tells us otherwise are robbing God of His glory.

When the Bible speaks of God, it speaks of Three Persons – God, the Father; God, the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; and God, the Holy Spirit. And all Three Persons were active in creation. The Apostle John in writing about creation, says referring to Jesus Christ,

3 All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made (John 1:3).

And Genesis 1:2, speaking of creation at its beginning, tells us, “And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

The Bible also tells us that God’s work in creation did not take millions and billions of years, but that He did it in six, twenty-four days. Genesis 1 tells us it was done in six days, and when the Lord gave the Law to Moses which we read about in Exodus 20, in speaking of the Sabbath, the Lord said,

11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

This verse means that if the sabbath day is a twenty-four hour day, then the days of creation were also twenty-four hour days.

But then the question arises, What happened to the universe after God created it? Did He leave it to run by itself, or did He maintain it by His own wisdom and power? Is God active in the operation of the world today? And I could extend that question to ask, Has the Lord always been involved in the day to day function of the universe? And the answer that we find in the Bible in answer to these questions is, Yes, the Lord is in absolute control of all that is going on in the world. In fact, He is the Doer of it all. The world could not survive at all if the Lord were not sustaining it moment by moment. In Hebrews 1:3 we learn, among other things, that the Lord Jesus Christ is “upholding all things by the word of His power.” And this means not only that the Lord sustains the world “by the word of His power,” but that He is moving everything along in the

fulfillment of His plans and purposes which cause Him to create the universe in the beginning. This is what the Lord told Noah after the flood was over. This is what we are told in Genesis 8:22 were the Lord's words to Noah:

22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. The Lord told Noah that over 4,000 years ago, and we are all witnesses that what the Lord said to Noah, is still going on.

The first chapter of Genesis gives us the origin of our universe and of every living thing in it – days and nights, the seas and dry land, all kinds of vegetation, the sun, the moon, and the stars; creatures that live in the water, birds that fly in the air, animals that live on the earth, and finally Adam and Eve.

But the Lord not only created all things, as we have seen He maintains and sustains it all. This is a subject so vast and so wonderful that it would take far more time than we have this morning to examine all that the Scriptures teach us about God and His creation. Psalm 145:15 and 16 tell us something of the greatness of our God in these words:

15 The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.

16 Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

We have all seen what a tremendous job it has been to reach the people of New Orleans, to rescue them, to feed them, but God has been providing food every day for all of His creation since the beginning of time, and He has not had to depend upon anyone else to help Him!

The Lord Jesus said in that great section of Scripture known as His sermon on the mount that God “maketh His sun to rise” and that He is the One Who “sendeth rain on the just and the unjust” (Matt. 5:45).

Psalm 104 explains God's care over His creation in ways that show the greatness of the Lord. Let me read it for you so that you can see that this world could not exist if it were not for the way in which the Lord is daily involved in all of His creation. **(Read Psalm 104.)**

If we understand this, then we will see why it is right for us to thank the Lord when we sit down to eat our food, and to praise Him for the way He protects and cares for the whole world day after day. If it were not for

God there would not be a tomorrow for any of us, or a today. In fact, we would not be alive.

When the Apostle Paul went to the city of Athens to preach the Gospel, this is how he began his message when he saw that they had an altar to “an unknown god” just in case, with all of their idolatry, that had missed any God unintentionally. Listen to what he said. **(Read Acts 17:22-31.)**

So this truth is all through the Bible. It is a record of the amazing faithfulness of God, His sovereign power, and His grace and His love.

Who gives us days and nights? God does. Who keeps the sun shining? God does. Who gives us rain? God does. Who gives us the four seasons of the year? God does. Who provides our food for us? God does. Who separated the sea from the land so that we would have a place to live on the earth? God did.

But Adam and Eve did not live very long on the earth until they had disobeyed the Lord, and they, especially Adam, brought the world under divine judgment because of their disobedience. From that day to this man has felt that he can get along just fine without God. Romans chapter 1 tells us of all the corruption that has filled the earth because man has chosen generation after generation to reject God, to refuse to have anything to do with Him. And we are seeing in our own generation the harvest of sins, and the troubles that go along with sins. We live in a fallen world, a world that has turned its back upon God, upon His Son Jesus Christ, and upon His Word. If you keep up with what is going on in this world of ours, you know that the action in our own country is against God and Christ and the Bible. Most people don't give God a thought, but we are learning that God is not going to remain silent and let man do whatever he wants to do.

We can learn a lot of things if we will just read the Bible. Long ago the Lord said to the people of Judah through the prophet Jeremiah,
22 Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not pass over it? (Jer. 5:22).

Let's think about that verse for a moment. Notice the question that the Lord used to introduce one statement as to why they should have the right

answer to His question. He said to His people, “Fear ye not me?” To fear God is to recognize that He is God, and to submit ourselves to Him, to do His will, to do anything to keep from displeasing Him. To fear God is to worship Him, to love Him, to trust Him. And Solomon said that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding” (Prov. 9:10). What man, or group of men, or even a nation is great enough to withstand the Lord? We are accountable to God whether we believe it or not. The person who doesn’t want to have anything to do with God, or with Christ, or the Bible, is a person who is pictured in the Bible as a fool. God says to His people, “Aren’t you going to fear me, the God of creation, the God Who made you, the God Who gives you the very breath that you breathe, and Who provides every bit of the food that you eat? The Bible makes it very clear that God is deeply concerned about the things that we do, and the way we live.

Have you ever thought about the sand that lines the seashores of the world? Has it ever occurred to you that God put it all there, and that He keeps it there for a purpose?

But now the question is, What does it mean when we have a tsunami or a hurricane that drive the waters of the ocean over the land, causing death and destruction like we have witnessed this past week – *and this is not the first time that this has happened, but it is the first time that this has ever happened in our country on such a major scale!* **What does it mean? It is the greatest warning that our nation has ever had that God is very angry with the way we are living. And the story of God’s judgment upon Egypt in the days of Moses also tell us that if we don’t pay attention to what God is doing, the judgments are going to get worse and worse. This is the worst we have ever had, but it is not the worst that God can give us. For a long time in our country we have been displeasing God by the way we have lived, and we have felt that either there is no God, or that He doesn’t care how we live. But we have very tangible evidence along our Gulf Coast that God does care, and that He is seeking to awaken us out of our national stupor.**

Does God care that we are living our lives without Him? Does He care that we are more concerned about pleasing ourselves than we are about pleasing Him? Paul told the Athenians that God has appointed a day in which He is going to judge the world in righteousness, and that day is coming.

Now let us turn to Luke 13. Does this tragedy which we have been witnessing this week mean that the people who live along the Gulf Coast are the worst people in our country? No, it does not! It does mean that God is angry with their lifestyle, a lifestyle that has invaded the lives of people all over our country. The Lord by these two incidents to which He referred in Luke 13 are full of warnings for us. Those who speak of this tragedy as “a wake up call,” are right – not that we should wake up to ways in which New Orleans could be rebuilt to withstand hurricanes, but that we should wake up to the fact that we are sinners under divine judgment. We are doing all that we can as a nation to protect ourselves from the ungodly terrorists who are on the loose everywhere, and causing more and more trouble all of the time. But the One we need to fear is the Lord. We have grieved over the miserable condition of the people in New Orleans, living in such terrible heat, with no food and no water, in the filthiest conditions possible. I thought that their condition is a picture, a partial picture, of what hell is going to be like, only nobody will be rescued from hell *unless we do, or have done, what the Lord Jesus says that we all must do. And it can all be said in one word: “Repent.” What are we to repent of? The answer is clear: we are to repent of our sins. We are to express our deepest sorrow that we have been sinning against the Lord, determined by God’s grace that we are going to turn away from our sins and never go back to them again. But the remainder of the story is that we need to seek God’s forgiveness and cleansing through Jesus Christ Who came into this world to die for the sins of sinners.*

In Acts 20 we have the record of Paul’s last visit with the elders of the city of Ephesus. The Gospel had been taken by Paul into that pagan city, people had been saved, and a church had been established. But among the things that Paul said to them were these words which I read to you from Acts 20:20-21. Paul reminded them of his ministry among them:

20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,

21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God , and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Concl: Many people who have survived the tragic events initiated by the hurricane which God sent along the Gulf Coast, will go back to living like they did before they had this awful experience. It will never occur to people all over our country that they have been spared that they might have another day in which to hear about God and the Gospel, the

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good news that there is salvation from sin and its consequences by trusting in Jesus Christ, the only Savior from sin that there is. Both repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, are gifts from God. If you don't know the Savior, thank God that you are not among the victims in Louisiana, or Mississippi, or Alabama, and that He has given you another opportunity to hear the Gospel that you might be saved. Ask God to give you a truly repentant heart for your own sins, and that He would enable you to turn in faith to Jesus Christ for your eternal salvation.