

TBC – 10/13/02 p.m.

THE MESSAGE WE ALL NEED TO HEAR

Luke 13:1-5

Intro: We come again tonight to this very familiar passage which is found only in Luke's Gospel. And what makes it even more significant, is that we have no evidence outside of Luke's Gospel that these events actually did take place. But that should not bother those of us who believe that the Bible is the Word of God. We know that if these events had not taken place they would not be in the Bible. It is the Bible that gives us true history, and secular history is to be understood in the light of what we read in the Bible.

So I say without any hesitation that these events really happened. Pilate, who ruled in Judaea where Jerusalem was, had evidently killed a group of Galilean Jews who had come down to offer their sacrifices in Jerusalem. We don't know exactly what the problem was, but this is the explanation that Alfred Plummer gives in his commentary:

These pilgrims from Galilee had come up to Jerusalem for one of the Feasts, probably Tabernacles, and had come into collision with the Romans, no doubt through some fanatical acts of rebellion. The merciless *procurator* [referring to Pilate], himself in Jerusalem to keep order during the Feast, sent troops to attack them as they were sacrificing in the temple courts, and their blood was mingled with that of the slaughtered beasts (p. 338).

We don't know this for sure, but it is very possible that something like this took place. Pilate was the governor of Judaea, and Herod was the tetrarch of Galilee, and some feel that this may have been the reason that Pilate and Herod became enemies. But this is just conjecture also.

Anyway the massacre occurred. How many Galileans died, we do not know. And whether or not those who brought this up were hoping that the Lord might do something to avenge this, we do not know. *What we do know is that the Jews who spoke of this believed that it was a judgment from God, and that very likely those Galileans deserved what had happened, making them worse sinners than any other Galileans.* It seems clear from the Lord's words that this idea was circulating around Jerusalem.

But there was another similar situation, and the Lord referred to this as well. Again much has been written about the location of this tower. Some think that it was a part of the wall around Jerusalem; others feel that

it was located in the Kidron Valley, but not far from Jerusalem. The location is not what is important. The important thing is that the tower fell and killed eighteen Jerusalem Jews. And some were saying that those eighteen must have been the worst Jews in Jerusalem, or such a terrible tragedy would not have happened to them.

So in both cases the trouble was in or about Jerusalem. In one, Galilean Jews were killed, but while they were in Jerusalem. In the other, Jerusalem Jews were killed.

The big question in the minds of the people was, What did they mean? Obviously the people looked upon both of these events as judgments from God. And that is certainly to their credit. There were about 3,000 people killed when the terrorists drove those commercial airliners into the twin towers of the World Trade Center, but nobody except for a few Christians here and there throughout our country believe that God had anything to do with what happened. And consequently the idea that there might be some message from God in it for our country, and for every other country on the face of the earth, is not being considered. The Jews at least believed in God. That is more than we can say about the masses of the people today. If they believe in God at all, the God they believe in is a figment of their imagination, not the God of the Bible.

Now this passage represents the way people would normally think. The idea was circulating in those days that those Galilean Jews who were killed by Pilate when he called his troops out, meant that those Jews who died were doing wrong, and they were killed because they were doing wrong. Notice that the Lord did not deal with that issue at all.

Job's three friends approached him on this same ground, that if God had not seen something evil in him, Job would not have lost his possessions and his family and his health. But that was not the case. Job was called the most godly man of his day, but every godly man can be more godly, and that was the way the Lord was using Job's trials. It was actually an attack of the Devil, but God used those terrible trials to make Job even more godly than he had been before.

Sometimes people do die under the judgment of God for wrongs that they have done. That was the cause of death in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. That was the case of those who died under the rebellion led by Korah. Even Moses was not allowed to go into the promised land

because he disobeyed the Lord. And there are other examples we can draw from Scripture.

But that was not the explanation for the death of those to whom our Lord was referring. At least it did not mean that they were worse than other Jews (even though they might have been bad). The real meaning of their deaths was a warning to the whole nation. These two events had probably taken place very close together in time, and this is what had caused such great concern among many of the surviving Jews.

So the Lord said that the deaths of those Jews whom Pilate killed did not mean that they were the worst people in Galilee. Nor did the deaths of those Jews who died when the tower of Siloam fell, mean that they were the worse Jews in Jerusalem, or even in all Judaea. What it did mean was expressed twice by our Lord: “Nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

We know from the reading of the Gospels that conditions spiritually during the lifetime of our Lord were not good! The Jews leaders were so corrupt that the Lord had no hesitation in calling them hypocrites. They had so corrupted the Word of God by their own rules and regulations that the Lord charged them with teaching as true doctrine the commandments of men. The very fact that they had been overrun and controlled by Rome, was in itself a warning from the Lord. And we know that it was not long after the Lord went back to heaven that the Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem. So the Lord had sent warning after warning calling the people *to repent!*

Sin had gotten out of hand, all kinds of sin. Do you remember when the Jewish leaders brought the woman to the Lord who had been taken in the very act of committing adultery? What did the Lord say to her accusers? He said, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (John 8:7). What happened? Who threw a stone? Nobody did. Instead we read this:

And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last ...” (John 8:9).

So there was not only a lot of false teaching going on, but a lot of immorality, and these scribes and Pharisees were robbing widows in the name of their God. The word for the whole nation was “repent.” What does it mean to repent?

Basically it means to think differently, to undergo a change of mind. And to whom do we repent. We don't repent to people. We may have things that need to be made right with people, *but basically we repent to God. We express sorrow and regret for our sins, and seek forgiveness and cleansing and a complete change of life style. True repentance means that we are truly and deeply sorry for our sins, and that we confess them to the Lord with the intention of heart that we will forsake them and not go back to them again.*

Therefore when these tragedies took place, what the people needed to be asking, was, What does this mean for me?

How many people do you suppose have asked that question about themselves since September 11 of last year? How many Christians do you think have asked that question?

Many things have been happening in our country, probably more things than any of us realize. We face a real threat from Iraq. Our economy is in big trouble. Gigantic troubles have been exposed in many of the leading corporations of America. And just recently the area around Washington, D. C. has been under attack by a sniper, and people have been killed. We know that God is speaking. This is a second major warning that the Lord has given our country. And neither of these troubles that we face in our nation is over. John the Baptist came preaching repentance. Our Lord Jesus Christ preached repentance. The apostles in the book of Acts preached repentance. And this is what the church needs to be preaching today.

But I have said in the title of my message for tonight that this message of repentance is a message which we all need to hear. What do I mean by that? I mean that repentance is a message for Christians as well as people who are not Christians. And let me explain what I mean.

Please turn to Revelation 2. Look with me first at our Lord's letter to the church at Ephesus. See verse 5.

Then let your eye run down to the letter to the church at Pergamos, beginning with Rev. 2:12. But see verse 12.

Next move on to the letter to the church at Sardis in chapter 3, and see what the Lord said in verse 3.

Finally, the last of the seven letters, the one to the church at Laodicea, beginning with verse 14 of chapter 3. See verse 19.

People who do not know the Lord need to repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what Peter told that crowd of Jews from all over the Roman Empire who were in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. They had demanded that the authorities kill the Lord, but Peter fearlessly told them that only in Christ could they be saved. But he called for their repentance.

But isn't it interesting that the Bible, even our Lord Jesus Christ told His churches that they needed to repent! And we have seen some of the reasons why. It is so easy for us to be caught up with all that is going on in the world, that we begin to neglect the things of God, and our love for the Lord and His Word begins to diminish.

I am just about finished reading the Psalms for the third time this year. And I have noticed that in more than the 32nd Psalm and the 51st Psalm did David confess his sins. And they were not always those two major sins he committed in connection with Bathsheba and her husband, Uriah. Neither of those sins is mentioned in these Psalms, and perhaps the reason for that is that we might feel that if we have not committed the sins which David committed, the Psalm wouldn't apply to us. But they do apply to us, and I want to point out one point in particular.

Please turn to Psalm 51. Follow as I read beginning with verse 5. (Read on down to verse 13, and make the point that God's blessing upon our ministry to others is determined to a great extent upon the fact that our relationship with the Lord is pleasing to Him. We repent to the Lord. We seek His cleansing through the blood of our Savior. And then God's blessing can be on our ministry to others.

The church today needs to repent. One dear old saintly missionary who used to attend the missionary conferences that were held at Multnomah and Central Bible, used to tell all of us to "keep short accounts with God." What did he mean? He meant that if there are things in our lives that need to be straighten out with the Lord, then do it now!

Now turn back with me to Luke 13.

Plummer in his commentary made a very helpful comment about the form of the word "repent" used in verse 3 as compared with that in verse 5. He

said that the form in verse 3 indicates that we need to live in a “continued attitude of repentance.” It ought to be a permanent characteristic of our lives. In verse 5 the form points to “the need of immediate repentance” (p. 339).

The Word of God profits us to the extent that we believe it and obey it. It is easy for us to look at the world and see all of the things that are abominable to God. But we need also to take a close look at ourselves, at our own hearts. We may not like what we see, and be like Job who abhorred himself. Listen to what that godliest of all men in his generation said about himself, and what he did before God:

5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

6 Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes (Job 42:5-6).

So we all need this message. The people of the world need to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ if they are to be saved. Those of us who know the Lord need to keep a constant watch on our own hearts, and live in a repentant frame of heart and mind, that we may be pleasing to God and so our lives can be used to point others to Christ.