

St. Luke 13:1-9  
“Purposely Driven”  
3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Lent

February 28, 2016  
Our Redeemer  
Rev. Brent Hartwig

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be unto you from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior  
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[*Introduction*] If you sin, you suffer. If you suffer, obviously you’ve sinned.  
The bigger the sin the bigger the suffering.

That’s what people said in Job’s day. That’s what people said in Jesus’ day.

People still believe that today.

- A tornado rips through a high school in Alabama.
- A bus crashes in Georgia killing baseball players.
- Car bombs and ambushes in Iraq every day.
- A drunk driver hits the mini-van with Mom and the kids.
- An expert pilot’s plane crashes.

And then in the text for today some supermarket journalists tell Jesus:

*“Pilate killed some rebellious Galileans and poured their blood on their own altars.”*

Their report implies that the ones who had suffered somehow deserved it because they were more wicked than the crowds themselves.

And Jesus will not let that assumption stand.

In fact, Jesus adds an item of his own from the tabloids:

*“Siloam Tower Collapses: Kills Eighteen!”*

Pilate’s victims were not more wicked than those bringing the report—or than the innocent victims who suffered when a tower in Siloam fell.

Why do such things happen?

The answer many give is: Because these people have sinned.

And because they’ve sinned they suffer. They get what they deserve.

You reap what you sow.

That is what the Bible says, that is what the crowd demands.

And we learned from the book of Job that is true, but what is equally true is just because you reaped it doesn't mean you sowed it.

Yes, if you sow it, you reap it, but just because you reaped it doesn't mean you sowed it.

Theologians say it this way: "The cause reversal isn't always true."

Why do bad things happen to good people?

Jesus just rules that question out of bounds, off the table, not allowed.

The question shouldn't be asked

because ultimately it can't be answered.

In fact, Jesus overturns all our questions.

He directs us to what He has in mind.

***"Unless you repent, you too will all perish."***

And He says it twice to make His point.

And in confirmation class when I say it two times or more

– it's going to be on the test.

Rebellious Galileans were killed. 18 were crushed under a tower.

People died.

***[Repent]***

The correct response to death,

whether by political oppression, terrorists, natural disasters,

car accidents, drunks, drugs,

wild living, falling towers, disease,

or whatever — IS REPENTANCE!

Death isn't the worst thing that can happen to you. DAMNATION IS!

Death is the sign that things are not right between you and God.

"The wages of sin is death."

And unless we all repent,

we will be worse off than the Galileans in the temple,

or the 18 killed by the falling tower in Siloam.

Repentance is the end of all your questions.

Repentance puts you in the position of being given to by God.

It gets you off your thrones and high horses and puts you on our knees.

It opens your hearts to receive God's mercy.

In our confirmation, we publicly confessed our faith in God.

But not just any god.

The one true God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity.

Who is revealed for us in Jesus Christ.

The same Jesus who speaks in today's text.

Jesus who died for them and all of you.

Who buried you and all of us into the grave of His death  
through Baptism.

Through baptized into His death the Lord teaches you to repent.

In other words, to be at the receiving end of His gifts.

To believe that His death is for you. His resurrection for you.

His Body and Blood for you in His Supper.

To trust that Jesus alone is your Savior and God.

You, me and all of us who are gathered here today are always in need of repentance.

And it is not easy. It doesn't come natural. We fight it.

Repentance:

— It's the fruitless fig tree gets all the attention.

— It's the focus of the gardener's rich mercy.

What advantage is there to admitting that you are a sinner?

To confessing your sin?

You get forgiven! You get fed! With the death of Jesus.

And so Lent is time to be purpose driven. Driven to repentance.

To kneel with St. Paul and say together with him:

***"Christ Jesus died for sinners of whom I am the worst."***

[*Conclusion*]

A fruitless fig tree. A sinner deserving death.

And in mercy, God gives you death: the death of His Son which is your life.

Driven purposely to Christ Jesus. For you are completely safe in His death.

So when you hear of tragedy in the news, or disaster striking dangerously near you, don't ask why such things happen.

Instead repent. Seek God's mercy.

Don't stay away from church. Don't stop praying.

But confess your sin.

Pray, "*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*"

Be forgiven with His words. Be fed with His Body and Blood.

Then let the Pilates of this world do whatever they do. "They can harm us none."  
Let towers fall.

One day you will die.

Of one thing or another. Tragically or not.

But with the Lord's death for you, you are forgiven.

With His Body and Blood fertilizing your bodies, you will not perish.

You will live as fruitful trees in the Lord's vineyard. Both now and forevermore.

Amen.

Now, let us make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Amen.