

4. 3-20-22 Third Sunday in Lent

Sermon- A Brain to Heart Thing

Scripture- Luke 13:1-9, CTW Psalm 63:1-8

Hymns- 453, 255, 30

Theme- In today's passage, I think that Jesus is getting to the real heart of things. We can say words that sound like we want to change, and we can do actions that look like we are changing, but if it doesn't come from our hearts—if we don't truly want to change to become the person God wants us to be, we have no hope.

I. As Sinners We Are All Equally Guilty, vv. 1-2, 4

In chapter 12 of Luke, Jesus is teaching a large crowd, and He says a lot about judgment.

A. He tells the people not to be so concerned about those who may be able to kill the body; instead, to be more concerned about the one who can throw your soul into hell.

He tells the parable of the man who produced a large crop, who said, "I'm going to tear down my barns, build bigger barns, and eat, drink and be merry." But that man would face judgment that very day.

He tells about a person who has been put in charge of a master's servants and goods. When the master doesn't return soon, he begins to abuse his authority. But the master will return when he least expects it, and will bring judgment on that steward.

Then we pick it up at verse 1.

1 Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

Now, we don't have a Biblical record of this event. Josephus was a Jewish historian who lived between 37-100 AD. He tells about several occasions where Roman soldiers killed Jews during times like the Passover.

At one Passover. 3000 Jews were killed. At another feast, 200 were killed. Another instance mentions Pilate by name as sending soldiers in disguise with daggers to kill Jews during a Passover.

The Jews referred to here are Galileans. They would not have been considered as spiritually righteous by the Jerusalem Jews. So, the people here telling Jesus about this, must have been implying that these Galileans were being judged by God they were worse sinners.

And God was using Pilate and his soldiers to bring judgment. When it boils down to it, they were saying, "Those Galileans were worse sinners than me, because God allowed them to be killed.

So, Jesus asks them a question in verse 2 (He asked them,) "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?"

B. In other words, "Do you think they were worse than anybody else?" Jesus makes a statement in verse 3 that we'll get back to, but as He was letting it sink in, Jesus brought up another incident like that.

4 Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them--do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem?

Again, we don't have a specific account of this happening. While the pool of Siloam isn't mentioned by name in the writings of Josephus, he writes about a time when Pilate took some money that was supposed to be reserved for use in the Temple or by religious leaders, and he used the money to lengthen the aqueduct system in Jerusalem.

And it could very well be that the work was being done around the pool of Siloam. If this is so, then during the course of this work, a tower apparently fell and killed 18 people.

And Jesus asks, "Do you think that these people were worse sinners than everybody else in Jerusalem?"

One of our problems as human beings is that we don't want to look bad to other people. We don't want people to think poorly of

us. And we often think that one of the best ways to "look better" to other people is to point out how bad someone else is.

We could go through a newspaper and start pointing out how bad people are:

This person was arrested for robbery of a bank and shot a security guard.

This person uses drugs or sells them.

This person murdered five people.

And the whole pornography industry is filled with nothing but terribly immoral people.

And all of a sudden, we don't look so bad. We tell a fib every once in a while. We gossip about somebody. We think less of some people for one reason or another. But, at least, we're not as bad as these other people.

C. Listen to what Jesus said about that in verse 3 "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did."

Paul wrote it this way, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "For the wages of sin is death..."

As sinners, we are all equally guilty, and we all deserve eternal punishment. And left to ourselves, and without heavenly intervention, we have no hope.

So...

II. The Only Hope for Sinners Is to Repent, vv. 3, 5

Listen to what Jesus has to say about it:

3 No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. 5 No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did."

A. First, I want to talk about the word, 'repent.' If you've been in church most of your life, then, you've heard that word a lot.

I read a new translation of this verse that helps to nail down the meaning. "But listen, if you do not consider God's ways and truly

change, then friends, you should prepare to face His judgment and eternal death.”

The word, ‘repent,’ means ‘to change your mind,’ with the understanding that you will change what you do. You see, God made us with a brain.

I looked up some information about the brain on a website called, **HowStuffWorks.com**, and here’s what it said:

Every animal you can think of -- mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, amphibians -- has a brain. But the human brain is unique. It gives us the power to think, plan, speak, imagine... It is truly an amazing organ.

The brain performs an incredible number of tasks:

It controls body temperature, blood pressure, heart rate and breathing.

It accepts a constant flow of information about the world around you from your senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching).

It handles physical motion when walking, talking, standing or sitting.

It lets you think, dream, reason and experience emotions.

All of these tasks are coordinated, controlled and regulated by an organ that is about the size of a small head of cauliflower: your brain.

EVERY scrap of information that comes at us, EVERYTHING that we choose to do, EVERYTHING that we do involuntarily, EVERYTHING has to be processed through the brain.

So, do you see why this word, ‘repent,’ is so important? What we THINK matters! What we think about God, what we think about Jesus, what we think about sin MATTERS!

B. It matters so much that Jesus says, unless we change the way we think, THERE IS NO HOPE—We, too, will perish!

But I think that there's a filter that affects how our brain processes information. —not a real, physical one, but it's one that based on what we believe deep down in our souls our hearts.

It's sort of like a water filter. I have one attached to my refrigerator at home. The water sometimes smells bad, tastes bad, because it has stuff in it. When the water comes into the filter, the filter holds on to all the bad stuff. It doesn't allow the bad stuff to go on through.

That's the way this "filter" works with our brains. For example, if a person does not believe in God, and they hear someone tell about something spiritual going on in their lives, this person will dismiss it as coincidence, as chance, because they don't believe that there is a God who makes that difference in a person's life.

But the opposite is also true. Let's say that a person believes in God and has a sincere relationship with Jesus, and they hear an unbeliever say something like, "I don't know why these things are happening to me, but I wish they'd stop." And because of the believer's "filter," they know that God is trying to get that person's attention.

C. And that filter is made up of what we believe deep down. Now, what's amazing is that what comes through our brains can affect what we believe. From time to time, God breaks through our unbelieving filter, because **He wants to change what's deep down.**

You see, Jesus uses a little word that's translated, 'unless' or 'except,' in the Greek language. It can carry the idea of 'IF you don't wish to...' or 'IF you don't really want to.'

I think that Jesus is getting to the real heart of things. You see, we can say words that **sound like** we want to change, and we can do actions that **look like** we are changing, but if it doesn't **come from deep down**—if we don't truly want to change to become the person God wants us to be, we have no hope.

Jesus came to give us hope when we had no hope because of our sin. But the sad thing is that hope will not last forever.

III. There Is a Time Limit on the Hope, vv. 6-9

Jesus told this parable:

6 [Then he told this parable:] "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. 7 So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' 8 He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. 9 If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

A. The gardener says, "Let's give it one more chance. I'll work extra hard on it. Maybe there's hope."

God brings us into contact with the truth of His word through people, through all the different media that's available to us today.

He allows things to happen, even causes things in our lives that are meant to break through that filter and get deep down and change what we believe and how we believe, so that we will be receptive to the gospel message.

B. When our lives are over, the hope is gone. The time limit is up.

Why did Jesus come? **To give us hope.** But we only have hope when we repent—consider God's ways and truly change.

I read the result of a poll that said 83% of American adults say they are Christians. But if we are honest and take a look at how we live as a culture, we know that's not true.

There are a lot of people who DO good things and say good things, but unless they have considered God's ways **and truly changed deep down**, they have no hope—just like those who stubbornly refuse to accept the truth.

As we sing our last hymn, I'd ask you this morning, Deep down, have you truly changed? Is your whole life directed by the Truth of God's Word?

If not, I urge you to focus on the ministry of Jesus, so that you can have the hope God wants you to have.

Amen? Let Us Pray...