**3/23/25**

**Repentance & Patience**

**Vicar Vince Piekarski**

**Luke 13:1-9**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSV) (2) **Amen.**

This is the week that you all have been waiting for!!! This is the week that one of the hardest questions in life finally gets answered from this very pulpit. This is the week that you can go back out of those doors, or even hang up on the conference call, and really feel like you finally have the ultimate answer that you have been seeking for oh so long!!! Or… is it?!?!?

Well, out of all the questions in life, out of all the things that manage to confuse or baffle us the most. There is that one question that always seems to be on our minds more often than not. There is that one question that even seems to keep most of us up at night sometimes… and it definitely is… Why do bad things happen??? or even more specifically… Why do bad things happen to good people??? That very question is at the heart of life more than our faith and trust in the Lord are at times, and quite honestly, we need to fix that.

Now, I know that you would love for me to give you one concise and perfect answer. I know that you would even love for me to give you someone or something to blame for all of this… However, I cannot and I will not!!! Although, what I do hope to do is actually paint a little better picture of the very answer that is wrapped up in these two particular stories merged into our Gospel Reading here today. They really do happen to shed light on the very answer to this all too complicated question. However, they do so in a completely different manner than our minds are typically programmed or wired to think. So, yes, that means there is some change in store of us to be able to get close to a desirable answer.

Now, of course you may think that I have lost my mind yet again. You may be sitting there and questioning how in the world the first story about suffering and a call for repentance have anything to do with the second story of an unproductive fruitless fig tree and a call for patience. Let alone you may be sitting there and questioning how both of these stories will help me provide and answer for the age old and hardest question that we all admit to pondering about way too often. This yet again where I remind you that God forces us out of our normal mindset and thought process. I have said this twice not just to nag you, but to really promote and hope you can really try and think differently here. So, I invite you to buckle up and join me as we travel through these stories to get to our answer.

First off, we have been dealt this business of people being killed, blood being mingled together with other blood, it being right or deserved, a tower crushing people, and that good ole qualifying factor if one person or group of people is worse off than the other. So, no matter whether a ruling and mean person decides that we be put to death, or they even mix our blood with that of animals and other things to really be cruel and humiliate us, it by no means is a judgment or even an indictment on how good or bad we have been. No matter if a tower fell on people back then, or a building falls on us now, it by no means is a judgment or even an indictment on how good or bad we have been. Life happens, tragedy happens, bad people and unfortunate events exist whether we like it or not, or even if we try to prevent it or not. We all are destined to move on from these earthly bodies at one point or another, and God really has no desire to make any one of us an example to one another. Now, that may have very well been an old mindset or concept, but it could not have been anything further away from the truth, and we do not need to accept that. For God does not punish, and God does not hurt, that is not His make-up, and it is not His mission despite what the world may have us all get tangled up in at times when trying to seek an answer to… Why do bad things happen? or even more specifically… Why do bad things happen to good people???

Alright, now onto our second story of the day. You know that story about that unproductive fruitless fig tree? Well, we actually get a few characters here, and we even get a few differing mentalities. It of course is very easy to try and relate these characters to people in scripture. It is even very tempting to relate them to you and to I. However, we do not need to get caught up in that mess, and we do not even need to get mislead by doing so. We just need to go ahead and take this story at face value for a change. We do not need to miss the very reality and the presence of God’s mercy. That very gift of God’s undeserved kindness and compassion is on full display. Our God of second, third, and fourth chances is present despite the initial order to cut the tree down, and we need to hear that because He can easily end all things and not continue to hope for and desire us all to change. We can actually be eliminated and cut down at any turn for any single mistake that we make. However, instead of doing so we are continually provided more chances, we are even fed and watered more, and we are given many more moments and chances to make things right with ourselves, our neighbor, and with God. We are called to right relationship with the ultimate example of patience on display here.

Now, did you happen to hear that word example there folks? I know I did, and I know I am not very comfortable with it. I am not one that is always willing to give more chances, for I do not want to get hurt time and time again. I want to protect myself, and I want to protect the ones that I love. However, that is not following the very example that is set right in front of us. We need to be vulnerable; we need to be more open, and we need to give more chances. When our friends or our family is not growing and yielding fruit in a Christlike manner, we need to continue pouring into them and remaining hopeful that one day things will change. By the grace of God, we are given another chance time and time again, and we need to extend these very same chances to others as well. God is calling all of us to be the people He desires us to be by following the very example he set for us. He feels we all can bear fruit, or He would not leave us be. God is being patient. God molded us in His very image and He knows that there is greatness inside each and every single one of us.

Now, that I have probably confused you a bit. Now, that I have made you think in a different manner. Now, that I have probably made you a little uncomfortable, because I know I did it to myself for sure. It is time to piece all of this back together, and get to our ultimate answer here. What we are to learn here and focus on is that no matter what little or big thing we do that is not good in the sight of God is wrong, there is no measuring stick, and there is no ranking system. Sin is sin, and it is bad in the eyes of God. That is precisely why we are all called to a life of repentance. That is precisely why we are all called to a life of love. For if we do not turn about from our evil ways and give everything up to God, and if we do not change our minds and our hearts the ultimate demise will occur even if we are still living here on this very earth, because we will be dead inside anyways. We are informed that “God uses suffering to break through our illusions of immortality with a reminder that we do not have unlimited time to order our lives properly.” (1) This is where we get the very reminder that “God at work in the world, and in our lives, extends to us the gift of grace.” (4) We need to be thankful for that, we need to accept it, and we need to go out there and let others know about it as well. We do that by repenting and by really giving things up to God, we do that by forgiving ourselves and forgiving those that have wronged us, and that is not just once or twice, but several times over. We also do this successfully by sharing about this awesome gift of grace, and not just keeping it to ourselves. For we actually do not know the time or the hour of Christ’s second coming, but we can make ourselves right now. We can continually do so by living in and through this very forty-day season of Lent by focusing on repentance and patience.

So, maybe you do not feel like you have an answer. Maybe you feel like I mislead you with the start of my sermon. Maybe you are sitting there and thinking there is for sure something else that I forgot to add in. Well, there isn’t!!! We need to quit trying to focus on all the tragedies, the bad people, and the unfortunate events that do exist. We need to accept that they are there, and they happen. We need to come to the very realization that, “God cannot be blamed or accused for all the brokenness of this world. If God is the author of death, how, how can He be at the same time the author of life as shown through the resurrection we celebrate each Sunday and especially on Easter. Is God the God of the living, or the God of the dead? You cannot have it both ways.” (8) We need to live a life of repentance and patience. Let me repeat that once again…. We need to live a life of repentance and patience. By doing so we have the keys and we have the answer to the hardest question of life. For by living a life of repentance and patience we are keeping our eyes and heart on God, and we are growing and producing fruit no matter what else happens in the world, and we are cultivating a world to do the same thing as well.

As a reminder, Jesus did not live without any bad things happening, or anything bad happening to good people, or even the worst and most gruesome things happening to Himself. Bad things happen because that is just it, they happen. Keeping our mind and heart on God will keep us on the very path that we need to be on, and all the other issues of this world will be dealt with by God, and not by us justifying an answer to a question that causes way too much anger, stress, confusion, and sleepless nights. We need to make this world the best that we can make it, and we need to work on ourselves and share and care for and with others. We need to be “little Christs” just like Martin Luther suggested. For when we live right, when we truly live, no matter what happens now or down the road, our eyes will be fixed on all that matters, a right relationship with our Triune God.

**Amen.**

**References & Study Points**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

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 Year C 2025

 March 23rd, 2025

 Third Sunday in Lent

(2) BibleGateway.com

(3) The Four Pages of The Sermon

 Revised and Updated

 A Guide to Biblical Preaching

 Paul Scott Wilson

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(4) WorkingPreacher.org

 Third Sunday in Lent

 Suffering is not evidence of a person’s sin

 March 23, 2025

 Commentary on Luke 13:1-9

 Debra J. Mumford

(5) WorkingPreacher.org

 Third Sunday in Lent

 Over the years, I have heard a number of sermons on this passage that have missed

 the exegetical boat because they focused entirely on the question of the relationship

 between sin and suffering (Luke 13:2-5).

 March 24, 2019

 Commentary on Luke 13:1-9

 Ronald J. Allen

(6) WorkingPreacher.org

 Third Sunday in Lent

 Jesus encourages them to change what they can—their minds

 March 20, 2022

 Commentary on Luke 13:1-9

 Jeremy L. Williams

(7) WorkingPreacher.org

 Third Sunday in Lent

 Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling? Not here. This time it’s loudly and pointedly.1

 February 28, 2016

 Commentary on Luke 13:1-9

 Matt Skinner

(8) SermonCentral.com

 Sin = Suffering No!!!

 Contributed by Tim Zingale on Mar 13, 2001

 Scripture: Luke 13:1-9

 Denomination: Lutheran

(9) SermonCentral.com

 Fruitlessness Series

 Contributed by Kevin Ruffcorn on Feb 27, 2013

 Scripture: Luke 13:1-35

 Denomination: Lutheran

(10) SermonCentral.com

 The Patient Gardner

 Contributed by Mary Erickson on Mar 21, 2022

 Scripture: Luke 13:1-9, Joel 2:13

 Denomination: Lutheran

(11) Taking Faith Home

 March 23, 2025

 Third Sunday in Lent

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(12) https://luthermatrix19.blogspot.com/2025/03/sundays-sermon-today-questions-of-

 jesus.html

 Sunday’s sermon, today: Questions of Jesus

 Christopher Halverson

 Saturday, March 22, 2025

 Luthermatrix

 The blog of a Lutheran Pastor, writer, and political animal.

**Luke 13:1-9**

 Asked about current tragic events, Jesus turns a lesson about whether suffering

 is deserved into a hard call to obedience. He then tells a parable that holds out

 hope that the timeline for ultimate judgment will be tempered by patience.

 1 At that very time there were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans

 whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.2 [Jesus] asked them, “Do

 you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse

 sinners than all other Galileans? 3 No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all

 perish as they did. 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 other

 people living in Jerusalem? 5 No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all

 perish just as they did.”

 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 man working the

 vineyard, ‘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.’ ”