

Luke 13:1-9

Today I'd like you to consider this question. Are you a **procrastinator**? When you have a **deadline** to meet, do you wait until the very **last** minute to get it done, or do you have it finished **days, weeks, or even months** in advance? Is your motto: why do **today** what I can **put off** until **tomorrow**? I'm pretty sure there are quite a few procrastinators among us - and that's not **all bad**. Some people actually **thrive** on procrastination. They do their **best work** when a **deadline** is looming over their heads - or at least, that's what they **say**. I **know** that, because for a long time, I was **one** of them. Now I **try** to plan **ahead** a little bit better, even though it doesn't **always** work out that way. But, whatever our tendencies **are** toward procrastination, there is **one** area of our lives where **none** of us can **afford** to procrastinate, and that's in the area of **repentance**. As we look at Jesus' words in our sermon text for today, it becomes very clear that **Now Is The Time To Repent**.

At the beginning of our reading today we find a group of people who brought a **report** to Jesus. They told Him about some **Galileans** who had been killed by **Pilate** while they were bringing their **sacrifices** to the LORD. We don't know anything **more** about this story than what we have right here in this verse. We don't know what **crime** these Galileans had committed, and we don't know if their execution was **justified** or **not**. But from Jesus' **response**, we can see **why** the people brought this report to Him. Apparently, they thought that these Galileans were being **punished** by God, because they were **horrible sinners**. It doesn't seem as though they wanted Jesus to condemn **Pilate's** action as much as to rail on those **Galileans** who were a **disgrace** to the Jewish people.

In His reply, Jesus let the people know that they were looking at this story completely from the **wrong** perspective. Jesus said, "*Do you think that **these Galileans** were **worse sinners** than all the **other Galileans** because they **suffered** this way? I tell you, **no!** But unless you **repent**, you **too** will all **perish**.*" Jesus wanted the people to stop **pointing fingers** at people like those Galileans, and to look at **themselves** instead. It did **no good** for them to try and determine what those **Galileans** had done **wrong**. Jesus' message to them was **simple**. Instead of pointing fingers at **others**, they needed to repent **themselves** - and if they **didn't**, then they **too** would **perish**.

To illustrate His point, Jesus talked about **another** tragic incident. He spoke about a time when **18 people** had been **killed**, when a **tower** fell on them. Again, we don't know anything **else** about this particular incident other than what we have

here. But we **do** know what Jesus' **point** was. These people **didn't** die because of some **specific sin** they had committed. Accidents **happen**, and this tragedy could just as easily have happened to the people who were doing all the finger-pointing. Jesus was pointing out that **everyone** sins, and **everyone** needs to **repent** - or they will **perish**. Jesus wasn't saying that if they didn't repent, a **tower** would fall on them on their way home. He was talking about the **eternal** death that comes to all those who **refuse to repent**, and put their faith in **God**.

We might be tempted to look **down** on the people in this text because of their **attitude** toward their fellowman. But we need to realize that, at **times**, we do the same thing. When it comes to the subject of **repentance**, it's so much easier for us to point out how **other** people need to repent, than it is to look at our **own** need to repent. It's easy for us to look at the people in our **community**, or our **congregation**, or even in our own **family** - and think **they** sure have a lot of repenting to do. It's so easy to point out **other** people's sins, and to view them as **horrible** sinners. But Jesus tells us, "Don't worry about **them**. Look in the **mirror**. Look at **yourself**. See your **own** sinfulness, and **repent**."

Repentance isn't an easy process for our sinful nature to accept. It isn't **easy** for our pride-filled hearts to **admit** our sinfulness when we have **done** or **said** something **wrong**. It isn't **easy** to come to terms with the **depth** of our own sinful **depravity**. It isn't **easy**, but it's **necessary**. The words of Jesus' warning are **clear**, "*Repent, or you too will perish.*" As long as we allow sin to **hide** in the dark corners of our **hearts** and **lives**, we are playing a very dangerous **game** with God - a game that we really don't **want** to play. How long can we continue to let those sins **grow** and **fester**, before we push the **Holy Spirit** right out of our lives, and totally **destroy** the **faith** which God has planted in our hearts? It is an **unpleasant** thought - a **frightening** thought. But it's a thought that drives **home** to us once again the important **truth** - **Now Is The Time To Repent**. Those words are not just for my **neighbor** across the street, or for one of the members of my **family**. Repentance is something **each one** of us needs to do - and we need to do it **now**.

In the **second** part of our reading, Jesus goes on to tell the people a **parable** which relates to the idea of **repentance**. The story is about a man who had a **fig** tree in his vineyard. For three years, the man kept coming and looking for fruit on his tree, but each time he saw the same thing - **no fruit**. So, the man told his gardener to **cut down** the fig tree, because it wasn't any **good**. But the gardener didn't **want** to cut down the tree just **yet**. He asked the man to give the tree **one more year**. During that time, he would **cultivate** the soil, and **fertilize** the tree. If after that year it **still** didn't bear fruit, **then** he could cut it down. This parable **isn't**

only a story about **trees** bearing fruit. The real meaning is **obvious**. The **tree** is the **Christian**, and the **fruit** which the Christian is supposed to produce, is the fruit of **repentance**. The **owner** is God the **Father**, who **made** us; and the **gardener** is **Jesus**, who **nourishes** us with His Word. Every time we **sin**, Jesus **pleads** for God to be **merciful** to us, and He does everything He can to get us to **bear fruit** - to get us to **repent** of our sins. But, in the end, if there is no **fruit** - if there is no **repentance** - then God's **judgment** will be inevitable.

There are two **truths** that are highlighted in this parable - the extreme **patience** and **love** of God, and the foolish **stubbornness** of man's sinful nature. Think about the great **patience** and **care** which are shown by the **gardener** in this parable. No one would **blame** the gardener for cutting down a tree that went **three years** without bearing fruit. But **he's** willing to go the **extra mile**. He wants to do **everything he can** so that this tree bears **fruit**.

Now let's put this parable into the context of **our** lives. God has shown us amazing **love**. In this season of **Lent**, we are once again reminded of the **depth** of that love, as we watch Jesus willingly **suffer** and **die** for the sins of the world. That means **every** sin, including all those sins that we try to keep **hidden** from God - all those sins that lurk about in the **shadows** of our lives - **every sin** has been paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ. That's why **He** died - so that we **don't** have to die **eternally**. That's how much Jesus **loves** us. And God has done even more than that. He has planted the seed of **faith** in our hearts. We **believe** in Jesus as our Savior because **God** saw to it through the water of **baptism**, and the Holy Spirit working in His **Word**.

In light of what God has **done** for us and how much He **cares** for us, **repentance** shouldn't be something **difficult** or **unpleasant**. When we hear the sinful **words** we have spoken, or see the sinful **actions** we've committed, our conscience will **convict** us, and we will take those sins to our gracious **Savior**, because He is the **only** one who can bring us **forgiveness** and **peace**. When we **have** that peace, knowing that our sins have been **forgiven**, we can finally begin to show the **fruits** of our repentance. Set **free** from the bondage of sin and guilt, we will look for ways to **live** for our God - **turning away** from the old sins of the past, and striving to live the way God **wants** us to live.

And of course, repentance isn't just a once in a **lifetime** thing. In fact, it's not even just a once a **day** thing. Repentance is a **continual** process, because **sinning** is a continual process for us as well. But as long as we continue to **examine** our hearts and lives, and repent of the sins which we **find** there, Jesus will

continue to **forgive** us, and the **fruits** of our repentance will show themselves in our lives. May the LORD continue to give us **repentant** hearts and fill us with His **peace** as we strive to follow His will for us. Amen.