

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 13- Luke 13:1- 9**

246- Unless You Repent, You Will All Likewise Perish, Part 2

July 13, 2014

Luke 13:1-9

1 Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were *greater* sinners than all *other* Galileans because they suffered this *fate*?"

3 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

4 Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were *worse* culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?

5 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

6 And He *began* telling this parable: "A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any.

7 And he said to the vineyard-keeper, 'Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?'

8 And he answered and said to him, 'Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer;

9 and if it bears fruit next year, *fine*; but if not, cut it down.'"

To the Glory of God

Now this Message is the completion of the Sermon that I preached last week which dealt with the first five verses of **Luke 13**. And the gist of that Message was two-fold:

1. God's Judgment is absolutely certain- it is coming
2. We are entirely deserving of it

The Return of Jesus to this earth at some point in the future is going to be the most wonderful and the most frightening event in all of human history. It will be in the words of the OT Prophet:

Malachi 4:5b

... the great and terrible day of the Lord

The Return of Jesus is going to be the culmination of everything that God has done up to that point as it completes Redemptive History in this world. Truly it will be great for believers and terrible for unbelievers.

And what is going to make the Return of Jesus so wonderful is that when He comes back- all temptation will finally be over, all sinning will be finished, all lukewarmness will be ended, all spiritual weakness will stop, and we will be gathered into the Arms of our Master and our Savior and the King of the Universe and we will forever be with Jesus in exquisite beauty and unspeakable Joy and unknowable Peace.

At that moment all wars will end, all injustice will cease, all poverty will instantly stop, all disease and failures of our flesh will be a thing of the past, and our dim eyes will see sights that are unimaginable and our ears will hear sounds that cannot be expressed and our minds will explode with thoughts that cannot be put into words. It will truly be a very great day.

But it will be a great day only because of what Jesus did and what Jesus said and what Jesus accomplished for us, and because of the gift of faith that God gave to us that enabled us to believe in Him and to trust in Him and in what He said and in what He did.

In other words- the Return of Jesus will be glorious for those who are saved and for those who have been redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb. It will be a great day for those who have been forgiven by Jesus and who have been pardoned by Jesus and for those who have been rescued by Jesus.

It will be the highest expression of joy and glory that we have ever known or imagined only because God chose to show us Mercy and Grace instead of giving us what we deserve- and that is His Wrath.

But for those who are *not* saved, those who have *not* been forgiven, those who have *not* believed in Him or trusted in Him or looked to Him for Grace and Mercy- the Return of Jesus to this earth

will be the single most terrible day of their lives. Because we must understand that the way in which God is going to end all wars and stop all injustice and remove all poverty and all disease is by completely and absolutely ending and removing all sin from this world. And the only way that all sin and all transgression and all rebellion against God will be removed from this earth is by God removing all sinners and all rebels who engage in unrepentant sin and who engage in that rebellion against God and who engage in shaking their fist in God's Face with their blatant and continual refusal to bow their knees to God's Authority.

And so the Wrath of God will be mingled with the Joy of God as Jesus bursts through the clouds and returns to this earth. And those who have been blessed by God to hate their sin, and those who have grieved over their sin, and those who have agonized over their sin, and those who have repented of their sin, and those who have trusted in the finished Work of the Lord Jesus Christ will enter into His Joy, and those who thought so little of Jesus and who are consumed with their own self-righteousness and who have refused to confess and acknowledge and repent of their sins, and those who have sought to climb up into Heaven by their own works and their own actions will be consumed with God's Wrath.

And on that day- the saved rich will rejoice with the saved poor, and the educated people who are saved will worship with the uneducated people who are saved, and the voices of an untold mass of black, white, red, and yellow humanity will rise in a glorious crescendo and echo throughout all the created Universe as we praise the Lamb Who lived and died and rose again.

And the lost rich will burn with the lost poor, and the educated people who are lost will be damned with the uneducated people who are lost, and the screams of an untold mass of black, white, red, and yellow humanity will echo throughout all of hell and the smoke of their torment will ascend forever.

On that day- it will not matter one whit about your status in this life because the unsaved sexual deviant will be judged alongside the unsaved moralist, and the lost American will be damned next to the lost pagan. The religious man who was never born again will perish next to the atheist and they will wish they had never been born.

On that day the only thing that will matter is:

Are you saved? Have you been born again? Have you repented of your sins and trusted in the finished Work of Jesus Christ.
Is your name in the Lamb's Book of Life

... because Jesus said here in verses 3&5:

... unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

And we saw last week that this “**perishing**” that Jesus was talking about has nothing to do with your natural body- but your soul, and it has nothing to do with a death that lasts only for a few brief moments- but an *eternal* death that lasts and lasts forever.

Make no mistake about it- we need to be crystal clear about this- Hell and Damnation are expressions of Divine Punishment, of Divine Vengeance, and of Divine Retribution against all who sin and refuse to turn from it. And that is why the Biblical writers used words like:

- ✓ Propitiation
- ✓ Sacrifice

... when talking about Jesus. You see as we learned last week- the punishment must fit the crime, and there is no crime under Heaven as bad or as horrible or a crime more worthy of Judgment than human beings willfully and repeatedly sinning against God. For the creature to rebel against His Creator, for the made to snub his nose at the Maker, for the thing formed to transgress against the One Who formed him is the highest form of evil and wickedness that can be conceived.

For a God- Who prizes His Own Glory more than anything else- a God Who sets the Fame of His Name higher than the Heavens, a God Who does everything He does so that all will know that there is none like Him in all the Universe- for a God like that to see His Glory tarnished and belittled and stepped on and thrown down and laughed at and mocked and rebelled against by sinful people who only exist and who only breathe air at His Mercy is the height of offense and the height of insult and God will not take that insult lightly.

Now if you are unknowing about what the Bible teaches about these things- these words will offend you. If you have not kept your face

in the Book and your knees on the carpet- then you really don't understand just how Holy God really is. And so the concept of God's Righteousness and His intent to satisfy His Justice against those who have transgressed against God's Righteousness escapes you. If you have been on a steady diet of self-help and self-fulfillment and self-realization- then you really don't think that your sin is that big a deal and you can't even imagine the "god" that you have fabricated in your own mind being personally offended at your sin- at least not enough to issue out His Wrath against you.

And yet Jesus tells this crowd that has been around Him since **Luke 12:1** that having a tower falling on you or being persecuted by pagan overlords does not make you worse off than anybody else. These bad things happening to you doesn't mean that you are a worse sinner than the other "good" people. And so Jesus tells the crowd two different times:

... unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

And the only reason we will perish if we don't repent is because we are *as* guilty or perhaps even *more* guilty than the people to whom these tragedies fell upon. So Jesus tells us that *nobody* is deserving of God's Mercy and that *everybody* has earned God's Wrath.

And this shatters the human concept that "good" people go to heaven and "bad" people go to hell. That is a false concept, it isn't true; that concept is not taught anywhere in the Bible. Good people do not go to heaven- saved people go to heaven, born again people go to heaven, forgiven people go to heaven- and Jesus taught that the fruit of being saved is that you repent of sin.

And you repent and you *keep on* repenting. You don't repent just once and then you have your ticket punched and your home free- that isn't Biblical Christianity- Jesus didn't say that. The Bible doesn't teach that you repent once or that you follow for a little bit or that you seek God for a couple of weeks or that you submit to God's Ways for a few months- if you feel like it or that you obey when it is convenient.

No, you turn away from sin and you *keep on* turning away from it and you *keep on* seeking God's Face and you *keep on* following and you *keep on* obeying and you *keep on* submitting. And you don't do this *perfectly*- or without fault- but you do these things *honestly*.

So we must understand that being “saved” is being “rescued”, and being rescued is being “delivered”. And we are not being *rescued* from “low expectations” as Norman Vincent Peale taught and as his acolytes teach today. We are not being *delivered* from bad health or poverty as the Hay, Wood, and Stubble Television preachers preach. We are not being *saved* from not fulfilling our dreams as the Prosperity preachers teach. No, we are being saved and rescued and delivered from this horrific Wrath and this Vengeance and this Retribution that is certain to come. And Jesus says here that it all starts with Repentance. And Biblical Repentance has at least eight components to it:

1. Conviction
2. Confession (Agreeing/Acknowledging)
3. Grief
4. Hatred
5. Turning Away
6. Trusting
7. Changing
8. Maintaining

Jesus put it this way in **Luke 9:23-26**:

23 ... "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

24 For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

25 For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

26 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and *the glory* of the Father and of the holy angels.

And that is what true, Biblical Salvation is all about, and so it is the frightening horror of Hell and Damnation that makes God's Grace and Mercy and Forgiveness to be truly magnificent.

And that is why any attempt by anyone to minimize or marginalize God's Righteous Wrath, and to overlook or ignore our own personal guilt and culpability in our sin is an attack against the Biblical

Gospel. And the result is that nobody is convicted and nobody repents and nobody is saved.

Now just about the time we feel like Jesus has been hard enough about this and we are ready to go on to something else- He gave them a four verse Parable that illustrates what He just said in the first five verses. Let's look at that Parable reading **Luke 13:6-9** again together:

6 And He *began* telling this parable: "A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any.

7 And he said to the vineyard-keeper, 'Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?'

8 And he answered and said to him, 'Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer;

9 and if it bears fruit next year, *fine*; but if not, cut it down.'"

Now the question that is on the minds of these people who are in the presence of our Lord, is, "*Did these horrible events happen to these people because they were worse sinners than everybody else?*" That's the point. Look again at verse 2:

Luke 13:2

Do you suppose that these Galileans were *greater* sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this *fate*?

Now look again at verse 4:

Luke 13:4b

... do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were *worse* culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?

... and here Jesus uses the word "culprits", which was used to describe criminals and very evil men. So that is the question. But why is *this* the question in their minds? Because this was their theology. This is what they had been taught and so this is what they believed and so this was what framed the way they looked at life.

Now I realize that some of you want me to lighten up and do what some of these other churches do and have more music and less preaching, more comedy routines and less Teaching, and more drama skits and less Prayer- but it is Passages like this that keeps me going in the direction that I'm going. What we believe matters and what we believe fashions how we live our lives. So teaching and Preaching Divine Truth is paramount if we are to live rightly before the Lord. And you can say, *"Oh, come on, Brother Blair- we already know all this stuff. Everybody knows this- you don't have to take so much time here."* But I would suggest to you that the very same theology that deceived these people here in Luke 13 is still deceiving people today. And I would also suggest to you that the overwhelming majority of people in the modern Church have the very same bad theology about God and Man and Sin and Suffering and Judgment that these people had.

These people could not have been more wrong about why the Galilleans had been killed and why the Tower fell on the others. And it isn't just that they were wrong about these two incidents- they were wrong about how they viewed sin and they were wrong how they viewed Salvation and how they understood God.

And they were wrong about these things because of how they had been taught and what they believed. So from this-we can rightful conclude several important things about human beings:

What you believe will dictate how you live your life.

We must understand that while it is possible to fool some people some of the time- it is impossible for human beings to live- long term- contrary to what they believe. Sooner or later you will revert to who you really are, and who you really are is determined by what you really believe.

For example- if you believe that sin is not that big a deal- then you will sin with impunity- with little or no remorse until that sin affects you personally in some negative way and then you will alter your life. But even then- you will alter your life only *temporarily* and then you will revert right back to who you really are.

So conversions that are birthed solely from human emotion are worthless- they *will not* and they *do not* last- precisely because they are not a true response to a genuine Work of the Holy Spirit. These kinds

of emotional responses are called many things- but perhaps the most common is "Jail House Salvation". And what is meant by that term is that the only thing that these people are repenting of is that they got caught or they got in trouble and all they want to be saved from or rescued from or delivered from is the jail or the divorce or the sickness or the exposure.

These people want Jesus all day long and they are in every prayer meeting and they are faithfully studying their Bibles and they are in Church every time the doors are open- until they get out of jail or until their fine is paid or until they are reconciled with their wife or when their public humiliation is over or when they get the ankle bracelet taken off - and then they will walk away from Jesus in a heartbeat and leave Him standing in the middle of the road, and then they will never have time for their Bible or for Prayer or for Church and then the FBI can't even find them.

True and genuine and eternal Conversions must be birthed in Holy Spirit conviction of sin and a desperate desire to be rescued or saved or delivered from the Wrath associated with that sin. And the result of that kind of conversion is a deep and lasting appreciation and gratefulness for the Lord in mercifully forgiving them, and a powerful desire to love and obey Jesus, and an unquenchable hunger for Divine Truth and a desire to be close to Jesus in prayer and Bible Study and Church and Fellowship. And that is true even if they *never* get out of jail or even if they are *never* reconciled with their spouse or even if their conversion makes their life on this earth infinitely worse. And when that happens- the conversion will last.

So these Jews had real bad theology and so they looked at life wrongly and they understood the circumstances and situations of life wrongly and the result of their real bad theology was that they became utterly self-righteous and they remained lost in their sins. But this didn't start with them. Consider Job.

Job's so-called "friends" come to him in the middle of his calamity and they said, *"There must be sin in your life, Job, because God is obviously punishing you with all this calamity in your life."* These guys were silent for a long time and then when they opened their mouths- all wisdom left and they came to the very same ridiculous conclusion that when people have calamity in their lives- this is the direct personal judgment of God against them.

And that's what the Jews believed in Job's time. And the reason that these men believed that is because that is what is natural and normal to the human eye, and that is what Thomas Aquinas put forth in his real bad theory of "Natural Theology"- Good people are blessed by God and bad people are judged by God.

But, in order to believe that- you also have to believe that there are some "good" people and that these good people deserve God's Blessings- which also makes God obligated to bless these good people. And this is so wrong on so many levels, and, yet, today- after the New Testament being in print for 2,000 years and after the Old Testament being in print for at least 3400 years- this false theology is the dominant belief system in the world today.

Back in **John 9**- turn there with me- you have a man who was born blind and so what was the most powerful question of the day, what was on their minds more than anything else that they brought this question to Jesus? Look at **John 9:2**:

... Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?"

And this kind of question springs out of read bad theology that says:

This man is blind because somebody sinned.

Now what is behind thinking like that? Bad Theology; Bad Teaching. False Teaching about God and Man and Sin. And what is the result of thinking and believing like this? This false Doctrine:

If something is wrong with you- then God is judging you for your personal sin.

And the result of that false doctrine is the false conclusion that says:

If you're doing fine, and you're wealthy and healthy and prosperous- then that proves that you are a "good person" and God is pleased with you.

... and if that is true- then the Goal of Christianity and the goal of believers and the goal of the Church should be to equip people to be

healthy, wealthy, and prosperous- which will prove that God is pleased with them.

So another way of saying this is to say that the people of God are people of faith, and people of faith trust God for healing when they are sick, and they trust God for financial prosperity when they are poor, and they trust God for material blessings, and they bind the devil when they are attacked, and the reason they do all this is to prove that they are the people of God- the people who are pleasing to God or as Morris Cerrulo says:

“You need to be wealthy and you need to have material goods and you need to have good strong bodies so that the lost people of the world will see what you have and be jealous and want the God that you serve”

Or as Joyce Meyer told Time magazine:

“Who would want to serve Jesus if they thought you had to suffer after you were saved?”

Is that how we are to understand calamity- where several people were killed in Connecticut- by coming to the conclusion that they were the worst people in that school and that is why they died? Or that the most sinful people in Aurora, CO., were the ones who were shot in the theaters?

Why would God reach down his hand and drag his fierce Fingers across rural America in a F5 tornado- killing at least 38 people leaving small towns with scarcely a building standing- including the churches?

If God has a quarrel with America- wouldn't Washington, D.C., or Las Vegas, or New York or Hollywood be a more likely place to show His displeasure?

As people of the Book- we do not ascribe such independent Power to “Mother Nature” or to the devil or to chance. God alone has the last say in where and how the wind blows. If a tornado twists at 175 miles an hour and stays on the ground like a massive lawnmower for 50 miles- the infallible Word of the living God says it was God and God alone Who gave the Command.

Exodus 10:19

So the LORD shifted *the wind* to a very strong west wind which took up the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea; not one locust was left in all the territory of Egypt.

Psalms 107:23-27

23 Those who go down to the sea in ships, Who do business on great waters;

24 They have seen the works of the LORD, And His wonders in the deep.

25 For He spoke and raised up a stormy wind, Which lifted up the waves of the sea.

26 They rose up to the heavens, they went down to the depths; Their soul melted away in *their* misery.

27 They reeled and staggered like a drunken man, And were at their wits' end.

Hosea 13:15

Though he flourishes among the reeds, An east wind will come, The wind of the LORD coming up from the wilderness; And his fountain will become dry And his spring will be dried up; It will plunder *his* treasury of every precious article.

Jonah 4:8

When the sun came up God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with *all* his soul to die, saying, "Death is better to me than life.

Matthew 8:27

The men were amazed, and said, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

But why did the tornado destroy Granville, Texas, and not Gulfport? Why Henryville and not Hollywood? God has spoken about these things. Consider these three ways that He addresses:

1. Job, "Blessed be the name of the LORD."

Now Rhonda and I have lost two of our children- and that was a depth of agony that I cannot even explain, but Job's ten children died all at once because:

Job 1:19b

... a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died...

And in his agony- Job cries out to God,

Job 7:20

Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O watcher of men? Why have You set me as Your target, So that I am a burden to myself?

Job 13:24

Why do You hide Your face And consider me Your enemy?

Job 21:7

Why do the wicked *still* live, Continue on, also become very powerful?

In other words, Why *my* children and not the "wicked people"? Why do my children have to die and the wicked seemingly prosper? And we could add our own questions to that, "Why here and not there? Why now and not later? Why this but not that? Why Henryville and not Hollywood? Why do I suffer and the pagan seemingly goes free?

And God's answer to Job was *not* that he or his children were worse sinners than the others, or that Aurora or New York or the Gulf Coast had some dark secret. No, God's Answer was:

Job 15:8

Do you hear the secret counsel of God, And limit wisdom to yourself?

And,

Job 36:19-33

19 "Will your riches keep you from distress, Or all the forces of *your* strength?

20 "Do not long for the night, When people vanish in their place.

21 "Be careful, do not turn to evil, For you have preferred this to affliction.

22 "Behold, God is exalted in His power; Who is a teacher like Him?

- 23** “Who has appointed Him His way, And who has said, ‘You have done wrong’?”
- 24** “Remember that you should exalt His work, Of which men have sung.
- 25** “All men have seen it; Man beholds from afar.
- 26** “Behold, God is exalted, and we do not know *Him*; The number of His years is unsearchable.
- 27** “For He draws up the drops of water, They distill rain from the mist,
- 28** Which the clouds pour down, They drip upon man abundantly.
- 29** “Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, The thundering of His pavilion?
- 30** “Behold, He spreads His lightning about Him, And He covers the depths of the sea.
- 31** “For by these He judges peoples; He gives food in abundance.
- 32** “He covers *His* hands with the lightning, And commands it to strike the mark.
- 33** “Its noise declares His presence; The cattle also, concerning what is coming up.

The Apostle Paul said it like this in **Romans 11:33&34**:

- 33** Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!
- 34** For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?
- 35** Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?
- 36** For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.

And before you say, “*Yea, that’s real nice.*” Remember that Paul made this statement at the end of a three Chapter explanation of why God chooses some but not all, and that God distributes Mercy to whom He will.

Job’s horrible loss was *not* an indication of his great sinfulness because **Job 1:1** says:

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.

It is very possible that God chose Job for that deadly wind precisely because only the likes of Job would respond like this:

Job 1:20-22

20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped.

21 He said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.”

22 Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.

2. Luke 13:4–5, “Unless you repent.”

A Tower fell and killed 18 people in Jesus’ day. And Jesus spoke into that situation:

Luke 13:2-5

2 ...“Do you suppose that these Galileans were *greater* sinners than all *other* Galileans because they suffered this *fate*?

3 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

4 Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were *worse* culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?

5 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

And this is a word to those of us who sit safely in here in relative safety and survey the desolation of a Maryville and a Henryville and an Aurora and a Granville or a Pakistan and begin to reason within our own minds like the Pharisee.

“I thank God that I am not a sinner like them”

... because to us- the Lord would say,

“Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

We must know that every deadly wind in *any* town is a Divine Warning to *every* town. Every catastrophe to *any* area is a Divine Warning to *every* area. And every agony to *any* person is a Divine Warning to *every* person.

3. 1Peter 4:17-19- "God's Own people are not excluded."

2,000 years ago- the Apostle Peter wrote this:

1 Peter 4:17-19

17 For *it is* time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what *will be* the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

18 AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?

19 Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

Dear friends- we are not God's counselors. Nor can we fathom all His Judgments or just what God is doing. But we have ample evidence to suggest to us that God is not simply Powerful- but that God is Good- and that means that what God does is right; that it is correct and that it is working to not only bring about God's Glory- but the fullness of our Joy as well.

And that was the lesson of Job. So let us take heed to ourselves that we do not attempt to try to decipher the Hand of Providence with too much certainty or specificity. God is always doing a thousand things when He does *anything*. And we see only a fraction.

So we must stir our mental framework around this Truth:

When a time for Judgment comes- it usually *includes* and even *begins* with God's own people. God's people are not excluded from this.

That's what the Apostle Peter meant when he said:

For *it is* time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what *will be* the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

And that is the mentality of the servant of God. That is the mind set of all true believers. We realize that nobody is good, nobody is innocent- that all have sinned and all are guilty of repeatedly sinning willfully against God, and as a result we all deserve God's Wrath and Damnation. God is correct to damn sinners. That is basic- it is fundamental. God would be unjust not to damn sinners.

And we have explored that for some time here. Everybody on earth is a sinner and nobody is guiltless. And if you understand that- the real question is not, "*Why does God save some but not all?*" The real question is, "*Why does God save anybody?*" The real question is not, "*Why does God periodically destroy sections or areas of the world?*" The real question is, "*Why doesn't God destroy all of the earth right now?*"

And if you do not comprehend this issue properly- it is because you are either confused about what the Bible says about God, or what the Bible says about Man, or both.

So as Jesus gives this Parable- He is basically saying that trees that bear no fruit are worthless. Trees that bear no fruit are only good for firewood. And fruit bearing in this context is acknowledging that you are a sinner and repenting. So those who do not recognize that they are sinners and in line with God's Judgment, and those who refuse to repent but who have been deceived by their self-righteousness are the fig tree that bears no fruit. And Jesus says in **Luke 13:9:**

... and if it bears fruit next year, *fine*; but if not, cut it down."

The reference here to three years is talking about Jesus' Three Year Earthly Ministry in Israel- going about to seek and to save that which is lost. And the sad Truth about the only perfect Ministry that the world has ever known is that after three years of Jesus ministering- the overwhelming majority of the people whose lives had been touched by this Man will be fruitless and they will reject Him as being the Messiah and the only Hope they have of having their sins forgiven, and

in less than a year from now- these same people will nail Him to a tree and mock Him as He dies.

But remember that it doesn't end with that. These people bear no fruit. They are not smitten with conviction over their sins. They have no grief over the fact that they have offended God. They refuse to confess their sins and agree with God that they have, in fact, transgressed against God and trampled on His Glory. They categorically refuse to turn away from their sins and they do not hate their sins at all- they love their sins. The only thing they hate is Jesus- Who faithfully kept their sins before them and would not let them forget.

The result is that they are fruitless and so they are not forgiven and they are not saved and God will soon cut them down.

So as we read about this- what does that do to us? How does this affect us? As we see literally millions of people rejoicing over sin becoming acceptable and even promoted, and as we see iniquity abounding in our day- what does that do to us?

Romans 1 says that as we see sexual perversion becoming accepted and dominate- that this is not the sins that will bring about the Judgment of God later on but is, in fact, the Judgment of Abandonment as God "turns them over" and no longer restrains them or convicts them.

Yet, that is not the main problem- because the Bible says that Judgment must begin at the House of God- not in the world. So as we see sin being celebrated- does it smite our hearts with conviction? Does it cause us to refuse to be lukewarm and independent? Does it make it easier for us to obey Jesus and to not forsake the assembling of our selves together? Does it stir hunger for Divine Truth and a thirst to be in God's Presence? Does it compel us to preach and teach more often and not less, to say more and not less, and to do more and not less, to pray more and not less, to trust more and not less?

Do we really think that as we see such things coming upon the world that now is the time to relax and slow down? Is now the time to take comfort in comic books and video games and television soap operas and fantasy? Do you really believe that *that* is the Guidance of the Holy Spirit?

This is why I am faithful to tell you repeatedly that it is far better to lose your life than to waste it. It is far better to labor in the Gospel

with such intensity that your heart bursts asunder than to sit and plan for your retirement so you can play shuffle board and collect sea shells.

Therefore, God's Will for America- under His mighty Hand- is that every Baptist and every Methodist and every member of a Reformed Church and every Jew and every Buddhist and every Muslim and every atheist repent of sin and run into the Arms of Jesus for forgiveness and eternal life. Because Jesus- not Nature- rules the wind. Those tornadoes were His, that tragedy was His, that horror was His, that injustice was His. And that Glory awaiting us- is His

But before Jesus takes a single life in a tragedy or a storm- He gave His Own on a rugged Cross. And He says to us this morning, He says to America, yea, He says to the peoples of the world-

Repent and come to Me

And to both the devastated and the smugly self-assured- Jesus says:

Repent and come to Me

... and as we repent and as we trust and as we hope in Him- Jesus will give us help now and one day- in the Resurrection. And the Promise of the God Who cannot lie is this- God will give you more in your tragedy and through your tragedy and because of your tragedy- than the tragedy itself had the power to take away from you. So run to Jesus today and repent.

Amen. Let's pray.