

Sunday Sermon: March 24, 2019

Sermon Text: Luke 13: 1-8

Sermon Theme: Uncovering the Devil's Lies: God is Angry with You

Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. ² Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? ³ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

⁶ Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. ⁷ So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'"

⁸ " 'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.' "

Many times we put crime and punishment together. If you do something, there are consequences or a punishment. This is something we learn from the time we are little. When we did something wrong, we were punished or spanked. It also a lesson that is reinforced as we grow older: do something wrong in high school, the car gets taken away. Do something wrong in college, get kicked out of school. Do something wrong in life you might get a ticket, arrested or something worse.

Some people even go a step further believing that what we do affects what we receive from others. If you do bad, bad will come, if you do good, good will come.

The truth is, its not that easy. Bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people all the time. There is no cosmic rule that is evening the scale so that everything comes out even in the end.

Yet, we do know there is good and evil. There is our God and the devil who fights against God. The devil wants to frustrate and destroy all the good blessings God gives every day. He wants us to doubt that God is good.

When troubles or problems come to us in our life, the devil is right there with our next lie. If something bad happens in your life, God must hate you, he must be punishing you for something.

It is with the thought of crime and punishment, actions and consequences that this group of people come to Jesus with some terrible news. Pilate had murdered some Galileans in the temple.

This was such big news because of what Pilate had done. The Gentiles were not allowed to enter the temple area for any reason. The fact that Pilate and soldiers had pursued these people into the Temple meant that they must have done something really bad, that Pilate was willing to go in Temple and get them.

There was another implication that they were making that would make it big news. Their blood had been spilled in the Temple, mixing with the sacrifices. This would have desecrated, them, the sacrifices and the Temple making it a terrible sin against God. The implication was that the Galileans must have done something really bad, some terrible sin, that God was punishing them for right there on the spot.

This was the not the only time that we see hear this type of logic about sin and punishment. There was another time when Jesus and his disciples came upon a man who was born blind. The disciples asked Jesus a question that was very similar to these people. **"who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"**

In each case Jesus shows them that these things were not punishments from God. Here Jesus says, **"Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? ³ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?"**

When Jesus asks these leading questions, what do you think the people were thinking? What do you think they would have answered? Of course they would have said. Yes, Jesus, that's exactly what we think.

Yet, Jesus answer is very different. **I tell you, no!**

The devil is once again using some fake news. He has crafted another lie, which is hidden in some truth. When bad things happens he want nothing than for us to believe God is angry with us and is punishing us.

The devil covers this lie with some truth. God is clear in the Bible that he hates something and will punish it. We can't read the Old Testament or the letters of Paul without realizing that God hates sin. God says he hates any and all kinds of sin. He hates sin whether we think it is a big sin or a little sin. The other truth we realize is that God says he will punish sin. God's Word is clear, **"The wages of sin is death."**

Yet, the lie is that God sends punishments on us because he is angry and vengeful. The lie is that this angry God sends us punishments that fit the crime. If we sin big, God is really going to get us. If we have sinned little, God will only slap us on the hand.

We must overcome this fake news with the truth. The truth begins with why we experience problems in our life and where those trouble comes from. The devil wants us to think that any problem or trouble we have comes because God is punishing us, but that is not the case.

Trouble and problem can come from the devil. The devil may bring trouble into our life to try to tempt us away from God. The devil can and does work through our sin or through the sin of others to bring many troubles and problems into our life. The devil really wants to shake our faith that God is loving and good. This type of trouble from the devil is intended to hurt us and get us to go to hell.

Trouble and problem can also come from God. God may allow trouble into our life to help turn us from sin and unbelief back to him. This is intended for our good to keep us close to him. Let's take a little more of a look at this second reason.

If you and your children or grandchildren went on a hike on one of the harder trails in Red Rock, what would they do if you weren't paying any attention and began to wander close to the edge? Maybe you might yell at them, maybe you would grab them by the backpack and pull them away from the cliff, maybe you would have to remain closer to them instead of allowing them to walk a distance away?

Why would you do that? Are you doing that because you are being mean? The child might think so, but that's not the reason is it? You would do those things to keep the children and grandchildren safe from walking too close to the edge and falling over.

We are like that child that likes to dance near the edge of the cliff that leads to death and hell. Sometimes we know exactly what we are doing. We allow sins to come into our life because they are fun or entertaining. A few nights of drunkenness, sex, gambling, or drugs surely won't hurt us, we have this all under control. Other times, we don't really know what we are doing. We don't realize that our coveting is getting us nearer and nearer to stealing, lying to our spouse is getting us closer and closer to doing something worse to cover up those lies, our wandering eye has led us to a wandering heart.

Is it more loving, to let the child fall or to stop them? When we are teetering on the edge of sin, is it more loving of God to let us fall or to bring us back to him in some way.

Sometimes God calls us quietly through a friend, family member, pastor or elder. When we don't listen, God might have to act more like the parent who grabs the backpack, or even allow something into our life that shakes us up a little. At these times, God has to make our sin so plain to us and the world that the only thing we can do is repent of that sin.

Jesus answers this lie of the devil with his own truth. The grace and mercy of God is shown in his patience with sinners like you and me. When we sin there is no lightning bolt from heaven that strikes us down. Instead, Jesus shows us that God shows his love, by waiting longer than we expect and taking far more action to call us back when we are wandering in sin.

⁶ Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. ⁷ So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'

⁸ " 'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.' "

We have some experience with this sort of scenario in the climate we live in. In Nevada, if something is dying or is dead, there is no bringing it back. We chop it up, dig it up and throw it away. This is what the owner of the vineyard directed his servant to do to the tree that appeared to be dying.

What was the servant's reply? Leave it for a while longer, I'll do all I can to make it fruitful again. I will tend it and feed it. If it still does not grow, even after I do all I can, then we can cut it down."

Sometimes we are that tree. Sometimes we are not bearing fruit because we have been sinning. He has every right to dig us up and throw us away. But he doesn't. Instead he is patient with us. Like the gardener in the parable, God sends the Holy Spirit to tend to us and build faith so that we will know where to go when we have trouble and trial.

What about what God says about sin? What about the punishment that he promises will come because of sin? Don't we still have to worry about sin? No, we don't. We don't because God has already punished our sins. He has brought this punishment on his own son. Our price has been paid, our sins have been taken away. God wants nothing more for us, than to repent of our sins and to know the joy of the forgiveness that he freely and fully forgives.

According to our way of thinking God has every right to be angry with us and to punish us for our sin. But this is a lie of the devil. The truth is that God loves us and wants us to be with him forever and he is willing to do anything to accomplish that, even die to take our place.