

## **“Pay Attention To Christ’s Call to Repentance!”**

Luke 18:9-14

Dear Friends in the Lord,

Is God trying to tell us something? When disasters strike around the world, that seems to be the conclusion that most draw. After the deadliest tsunami in history (according to National Geographic) struck countries like Indonesia, India, & Thailand along the Indian Ocean killing ¼ of a million people, many claimed that God used this disaster as judgment against these Muslim/Buddhist countries whose religions blatantly reject Jesus. After Katrina pounded New Orleans in 2005, some viewed that as God’s judgment against the shady behavior, casinos, and the perverted activity of the south. The conclusion was that God was fed up with those people and wiped them out as punishment.

To be sure, Sodom and Gomorrah is a Biblical story where we can accurately determine God’s purpose. God withheld no punches when he said: **The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry.** (Gen 18:20) Counting down from 50, Abraham tried to find 10 righteous souls to spare the cities from certain doom, but came up empty-handed. God sent 2 angels to rescue Lot & his family, they said: **Get them out of here, because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it.** (Gen 19:12-13) God was clear that his patience waiting for them to repent ran out. But there’s no Bible passage that says God was doing the same with the 2004 tsunami or 2005 Katrina. Can we read a message like this into occurrences today?

But how can we analyze the mind of God? So a better purpose in these matters is to hear Jesus teach us a message of the urgency of repentance for believers. The important thing here is not so much what is happening to us on earth, but what is happening in our hearts that matters the most. So let’s:

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1. He gives us the signs
2. He gives us the time

### 1

Jesus is on his final approach to Jerusalem and crowds are following him. Before our text, Jesus chastises them for being **book smart, but spiritually ignorant**. They interpret the signs of nature very well, (when it’ll be cold/stormy,) but they can’t see the signs of the times. They can’t see the signs of spiritual famine in their own hearts.

Jesus’ words to them come as a response to a question that some brought to him. **There were some who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.** There is no documentation of this story anywhere in the Scriptures. But apparently, God-fearing Galileans were worshipping in the temple with their sacrifices when Pilate’s soldiers came charging in and murdered them in cold blood. And when the soldiers killed them, their blood mixed with the blood of sacrifices thus defiling the offerings and the temple.

This event prompted the question as to whether or not God was punishing these few Galileans for some specific sin. OR were these Galileans worse sinners than others who were not murdered. Jesus responds: **I TELL YOU, NO! BUT UNLESS YOU REPENT, YOU TOO WILL ALL PERISH.** These people weren’t killed because of a sin they had committed or that they were worse than those who survived. Jesus emphatically says **NO**, rather **I want you to pay attention to the signs of the times, and focus on your own spiritual life instead of pondering the spiritual state of the Galileans.** What is in your heart? What if you were among the Galileans? Would you be lost because of a lack of repentance Before God?

Jesus cites another tragedy which again is not recorded in Scripture. The tower of Siloam was a part of the Jerusalem city wall and apparently, the wall and the tower gave way killing 18 people. Instead of a crime, now we have a sudden accident in which people lost their lives. Once again, they wondered **“why did God let this happen?” Why did some perish and others not?** Was God punishing these people because of some sin. OR maybe these 18 were worse sinners than the other citizens in Jerusalem”. Jesus says **NO**, the answers to these questions will have to be answered in eternity. Instead Jesus urges: **UNLESS YOU REPENT, YOU TOO WILL ALL PERISH** eternally.

In both cases, Jesus emphasizes the importance of repentance in the life of believers. We are in a constant struggle in this life. Satan wants to lead us away from Jesus. He wants us to reject Jesus. We are in a life/death battle with our sinful words, actions, and thoughts. We have weaknesses, habits, and tendencies which we do over and over again forgetting how offensive they are before God and deserve eternal death. Like Paul claimed, **the good I should – I do not. And the evil that I should not do – that I do.** It’s a battle we can’t win alone.

**Repentance involves a “turning around”.** This means we know from God’s law the punishment we deserve from God. So we turn around to the help which only Jesus our Savior can bring us. When we hear the Gospel, God’s Spirit works in us the trust to believe that love which Jesus has for us. The Spirit works that faith to cling to Christ for our forgiveness and moves us to trust in Him. Then out of thankfulness to God for His forgiveness, we follow him in the way He wants us to go with lives that are turned around and bring forth fruits of faith..

In baptism, Martin Luther says that **OUR OLD ADAM WITH HIS EVIL DEEDS AND DESIRES SHOULD BE DROWNED BY DAILY CONTRITION (sorrow) and REPENTANCE, AND DIE, AND THAT DAY BY DAY A NEW MAN SHOULD ARISE, TO LIVE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PURITY NOW AND FOREVER.** Daily repentance is necessary. We confess our sins of today and turn to God’s forgiveness. Then tomorrow we’ll do the same thing. **DAILY** sorrow and **DAILY** repentance is what is Christ’s Call is.

Who knows when a criminal act of brutality may strike us? People are being shot dead filling their gas tanks, checking out used cars, or walking into a grocery store. People are killed in tornadoes and floods, or T-boned by someone running a stop sign. You never know. When you look at these signs, we do not want to suffer a tragic, eternal death sentence in hell because we did not listen to Christ’s warning. That’s why his call is so urgent. That’s why it’s so important to pay attention to Christ’s call to repentance!

## 2

Jesus makes his listeners and us think. We need to pay attention to his call to repentance and not take that lightly. So He gives us the time in our lives to hear his call and cherish his heavenly blessings.

We know of that time as our “time of grace”. In a parable, Jesus makes the point that the time He gives us is limited. **A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of it, “For 3 years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! “Sir”, the man replied, “leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.”** Often a ‘fig tree’ was symbolic of Israel. Here he’s applying it to the people of Jerusalem. God’s people hardly looked like a productive fig tree. They often looked more like a dead tree that had no fruit on it. The owner expected fruit, but there was none. The natural move was to cut it down and make room for the other trees that were producing.

But the vinedresser begged for more time. He didn’t want to see the tree pulled out for the fire, but vowed to care for it some more so that it might become fruitful once again.

Luke gives no interpretation of the parable, but the meaning is clear. God has every right to chop us barren trees down and throw us into the fires of hell. Yet His grace gives every person that time of grace to turn to him in repentance and faith. Our time on this earth is in God’s hands as David wrote in Psalm 31:15.

Now is the time for all of God’s people to daily repent and hear the Good news of Jesus taking upon himself our sins, and suffering the pangs of hell for us. But the reality is some do hear that news and **others stray away from hearing** that news. The call to repent must go out to them because there will be a day when God cuts down the barren trees. The time of grace will end.

If you know someone who is barren, dig around them and fertilize them with the Gospel. Urge them with Christ’s call to repentance to turn back to Jesus from whom they have strayed. We don’t know how much time is left, so it’s time **TO PAY ATTENTION TO CHRIST’S CALL.** That’s why Peter wrote: **The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.** (2 Peter 3:9)

Only God knows when our time of grace will end. Only he knows the day when he will issue his last call to the world to repent. That means **BE READY** constantly! Daily focus on his cross and you’ll be ready when he calls you to the paradise he is preparing. **SO PAY ATTENTION TO CHRIST’S CALL** ~ live with repentant hearts and bear fruit to the glory of our Lord!  
**AMEN**