



## Sermon: Sunday, March 30, 2025

### “Repent or Perish”

**SCRIPTURE: Luke 13: 1-9** <sup>1</sup> At that very time there were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. <sup>2</sup> He asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?” <sup>3</sup> No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. <sup>4</sup> 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? <sup>5</sup> No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish just as they did.” <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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?’ <sup>8</sup> He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. <sup>9</sup> If it bears fruit next year, well and good, but if not, you can cut it down.’ ”

#### **Introduction: The Meaning of Jesus' Words That You Will Perish Unless You Repent**

Today is the fourth Sunday in Lent. According to today's text, Luke 13:1, some people came to Jesus and reported the evil deeds of Pilate, the governor of the Roman Empire. Pilate had brutally murdered several Galileans and mingled their blood on the sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem. These events usually occur during the Passover season. During Passover, many pilgrims gathered in Jerusalem. Passover is a Jewish holiday that commemorates the Exodus, so their anti-Roman sentiment often manifested in social riots. The Galileans who died in today's text were sacrificed when Roman soldiers suppressed their riots.

However, those who came to Jesus and told him about Pilate's sins thought that the Galileans' misfortune was due to their sins. However, in verse 2 of today's text, Jesus said that the Galileans' misfortune was not because they had more sins than all the other Galileans. The Jews of that time associated the unfortunate event with sin. However, Jesus directly told them, “**No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did.**”

In the following passage, Jesus asked the people if they thought that the 18 people who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them had sins greater than those of all the people living in Jerusalem. The Jews of that time associated this event with sin. They thought that God was judging sins. However, Jesus said that was not the case. In verse 5 of the text, Jesus said, “No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”

So, what does Jesus mean when he said in this verse that unless you repent, you will all perish? Does he mean that if we repent, we will never experience any more misfortune? Of course not. In fact, we do not fully understand the reasons for all the misfortunes, evil deeds, and absurdities that occur in this world. There are people in the world who are shameless, selfish, arrogant, and self-centered, yet eat healthily and live well and end their lives, and there also are good people but end their lives unhappy.

The repentance Jesus mentioned in today's text does not simply mean a change in behavior, but a change in our being. If our being does not change, we will all perish. Just because we are a little more moral or less immoral than others don't mean we won't perish. So, what does Jesus mean when he said that if you do not repent, you will all perish?

#### **Body: Eschatological Judgment and God's Mercy**

We can find the answer to this question in Jesus' words, “**But unless you repent, you too will all perish.**” The phrase “**all perish**” has an eschatological meaning. Here the phrase, “**But unless you repent**” is from the first message Jesus proclaimed when he began his public ministry: “**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.**” (Matthew 3:2). In other words, the meaning of Jesus' words, “**But unless you repent, you too will all perish,**” is that the eschatological reign of God has already begun in our lives, so we should change the



direction of our lives to a life governed by God. This is the repentance that Jesus wants from us. However, in many cases, we do not see the kingdom of heaven and His reign that governs our lives. During the many injustices of the world, God's worldly rule may seem feeble to our eyes, but in the end, God alone is the victor of the entire universe. Christians are people who wait for this eschatological victory. Therefore, we do not lose heart or despair in any difficult situation, because eschatological victory has already been secured for us through the Lord's resurrection. Turning the direction of life toward this eschatological victory is the repentance, *Metanoia* (μετάνοια) that Jesus spoke of.

The end that the Bible speaks of does not only refer to the distant future in a temporal sense. The end that the Bible speaks of is already here and now in our lives. God loves us here and now in a special way. Therefore, even if an unfortunate fate befalls us, God's love is still valid.

Our problem is whether we experience God's love here and now or not. In fact, if we do not experience God's love here and now, that is God's judgment. Therefore, we should not think that God judges the world by giving disadvantages to those he does not like or by making them suffer in hell for eternity.

God's judgment of the world, emphasized in the Bible, is a paradoxical expression of God's extreme love and salvation for the world. God's love is so great and amazing that turning away from that love is judgment. However, we have difficulty experiencing and feeling God's good creation and his love in our lives. Why can't we feel or experience God's love well? The Bible says that the reason we can't feel God's goodness and love is sin. The Bible says that human self-centeredness and pride are sin.

We can live in the light only in the creative power and love of God. We can live a full life only when we make God's goodness the center of our lives. This is a sincere experience and confession that our lives are all gifts from God. Everything we have is the Lord's. The wealth, fame, health, and power we have are not ours.

We must correctly understand the meaning of God's judgment that the Bible speaks of. In fact, most of what we say and think of as God's judgment is not done by God but by man. People judge people in the name of God. Also, it is not God but man who makes people afraid. People force people to serve wealth. People tell people that if they do not live richer than others, they will be in big trouble. It is said that people should not forget who is more sinful, who is judged, and who is more unfortunate. All of these are the paths to our destruction mentioned in today's text. God has provided a way of salvation for people. However, people create hell for people. We must be able to see the meaning of the eschatological judgment and the goodness of God contained in it.

### **Conclusion: A Fig Tree That Does Not Bear Fruit**

In today's text, Luke 13:6-9, Jesus tells a parable. A man planted a fig tree in his vineyard. The owner waited for three years but did not get any fruit. The owner thought he should cut down the fig tree. However, a worker in the vineyard tried to stop him. The worker told the owner that he would take care of the fig tree for one more year, and if the fig tree did not bear fruit after one year, then he could get rid of the fig tree.

As in the parable above, the end of our lives is already imminent. The moment of God's goodness and love is already before our eyes. However, we miss it because we are caught up in all the worries of the world and self-pity. Even if we were to perish right now, there would be no excuse for these people. However, by God's grace, these people were given a one-year reprieve. This is the meaning of the parable of the unfruitful fig tree.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! God is not a judge (as we do in our hostility and condemnation of others). God loves each of us completely and fully. He loved us to the point of crucifying Himself. May you seek and discover how this love of God is manifested in your daily life. May this be a blessing to all of us.

**Amen!**

