

SIN AND SUFFERING // Luke 13:1-5

Message from the series, The Gospel of Luke

Two things are true about each of us: we are all struggling with sin on some level, and we all have a testimony of suffering. The intersection of sin and suffering is often where we live. This passage from Luke 13 helps to think Christianly about this intersection.

Five Observations about Sin and Suffering

1. “Why did that happen?” is the wrong question. (v. 1)

People often ask why bad things happen to good people or why good things happen to bad people. This is the wrong question. “Bad things” may fall into several different categories: catastrophic violence, natural disasters, or tragic accidents, but the question is not **why** did they happen—it’s why do not more things like that happen. Why does God spare us so much? It is his common grace that keeps more bad things from hitting us.

2. Suffering does not assume sinfulness. (v. 2)

We should not make a direct correlation between suffering and sinfulness. We are not to confuse physical safety with spiritual safety, and repentance does not secure our personal safety. We want to be clean from our sin as much as possible, not because it makes us safe, but so that our suffering is not confused with our sinfulness.

3. Holiness does not always merit personal physical safety. (v. 3)

We escape disaster, not because of our holiness, but because of God’s mercy. This is a direct refutation of movements like the prosperity gospel. There are two ditches to avoid: one is the notion that my suffering is a result of my sin; the other is that my safety is a result of my holiness.

4. Death does not discriminate. (v. 4)

It is not how you die that is significant—it is **that** you die. Everyone dies at some point. Regardless of how and when, the most important issue is whether they die in Christ. In the end the death rate stays the same, and eternity is what matters.

5. Repentance is your rest in the midst of sin and suffering. (v. 5)

When we repent, we are at peace with God. To repent means to change your mind about your sin and turn 180 degrees toward Christ. The Christian life is a life of daily repentance. God sometimes hurts us to heal us—never let it be said that our suffering is because we did not repent.

Repentance Involves Three Behaviors

1. Confession—confessing our sin to God and to those we have sinned against.
2. Contrition—experiencing godly sorrow, being broken-hearted over sin
3. Change—true repentance leads to life change

We are not slaves to sin but to righteousness.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are we prone to ask, “why did that happen”? How can we deepen our understanding of God’s mercy to see the question as “why did not more bad happen”?
2. How can we engage others with the biblical worldview that says that physical safety or prosperity are not guaranteed by one’s faith?
3. We might think of repentance as something that happens primarily at the moment of salvation. How can we train ourselves in daily repentance?