

Luke 13A

- When I last taught Luke, we ended in Chapter 12
 - Since we had such an extended pause in our study, I want to take a few minutes to review the transition that Luke himself takes to move from Chap 12 to Chap 13;
 - I called Chapter 12 one of the best chapters in the Bible on Christian discipleship
 - Christ taught the disciples on the importance of maintaining the right priorities in life and in ministry
 - On maintaining a steady reliance on God rather than ourselves,
 - On not allowing our fears and worries drive our decisions
 - And if you weren't able to hear our past teaching from Chap 12, I encourage you to listen to a CD and remember the content of that rich chapter
- But the end of that chapter, Jesus' focus changes somewhat, and He begins to speak of the need to recognize signs, and settle our debts, and make a decision
 - For example in 12:54-56, He reminds the crowd why if they can pay close enough attention to the skies to predict coming weather,
 - Then why couldn't they pay enough attention to the signs Jesus was performing to recognize Him as the Messiah?
 - They can't claim ignorance, in other words, because Jesus says they are fully capable of recognizing what they are seeing
 - In fact in verse 56 He calls them hypocrites, which means they are claiming to be ignorant, but in reality they know exactly what the signs they're seeing mean
 - In verse 58 Jesus teaches about a guilty man who's being taken to the judge for his day in court
 - And Jesus says that guilty man knows enough to make amends with his accuser before reaching the judge

- Otherwise if remains unrepentant to the end, the judge will condemn him for his crime and he's pay the price
 - Jesus' story at the end of Chap 12 strongly suggests to the crowd that they are in danger of facing the judge unless they first settle their debts with the one who has a charge against them
 - What 's Jesus up to here? What's Jesus expecting this crowd to do?
- Well, this is an interesting discourse and at the end of chapter 12, Luke leaves us hanging with the tension building
 - It's an effective transition into where Luke takes us next in Chapter 13
 - The first half of Chap 13 is unique to Luke – no other gospel provides what Luke provides here
 - So it interesting in that Luke felt a particular need to capture these events in Jesus' ministry while other Gospel writers decided to overlook these events

[Luke 13:1](#) ¶ Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

[Luke 13:2](#) And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were *greater* sinners than all *other* Galileans because they suffered this *fate*?"

[Luke 13:3](#) "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

[Luke 13:4](#) "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?"

[Luke 13:5](#) "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

- Luke begins chapter 13 with words "on the same occasion"
 - As Luke moves out of Chapter 12 and into Chapter 13, he mentions that some were present who gave a report to Jesus
 - From the text we're left with the impression that as Jesus was teaching, some in the crowd had come down from Jerusalem to where Jesus was at this time (probably still in Samaria)
 - As they arrive, they begin to share the news they brought from Jerusalem with others in the crowd

- It's unlikely that they arrived for the express purpose of telling this story to Jesus
- More likely, they were simply sharing of their experiences in Jerusalem with those they met in the crowd,
- To include this juicy little detail about Pilate and the Galileans
- But now as Jesus overhears their report, He responds with this intriguing response
 - He disputes the conclusions the crowd had made from what they had heard
 - So to fully appreciate why Jesus said what He did, we must first appreciate what was going on in the minds of the crowd as they heard the story about those poor Galileans
- Let's begin by reviewing who the Galileans are
 - Simply put, Galileans are residents of the Galilee (the land in northern Israel surrounding the Sea of Galilee)
 - Northernmost district of Israel, territories of Zebulun and Naphtali
 - Jesus grew up in the Galilee as did most of the disciples
 - He appeared there to his disciples
- As the story goes, Pilate mixed their blood with the blood of their sacrifices
 - This is a curious event
 - We have no other mention of such an event, either in scripture or elsewhere
 - From the text, we can surmise that these Galileans had traveled to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices
 - This would also mean that the occasion of their death was likely Passover, since only at Passover could a non-priest offer their own sacrifice in the temple
 - And apparently while they were there, they were slain by Roman soldiers under Pilate
 - Thus their blood mixed with the blood of the animals they were sacrificing at the time in the temple

- Others have taken the speculation to greater degrees, but the safest conclusion we can make is this one
- Of greater importance to us today is why this event was of such interest to this crowd
 - After all, Pilate and other Roman authorities were well known as men who persecuted Jews
 - A death at the hands of Pilate was not very newsworthy
 - In this case the news might have been more interesting because of where they were killed
 - Sacrificing at the Temple during Passover was the single most important religious act of the year for an individual Jew
 - It was the one time when a Jew could personally make amends with God for their sin
 - Failing to observe the Passover carried a strict penalty under God's law

[Num. 9:13](#) 'But the man who is clean and is not on a journey, and yet neglects to observe the **Passover**, that person shall then be cut off from his people, for he did not present the offering of the LORD at its appointed time. That man will bear his sin.

- So the fact these Galileans were struck down in the midst of a Passover sacrifice might seem to the average Jew to be evidence of a particularly strong rebuke by God Himself
- To this Jewish crowd it implied that these were particularly sinful men, such that God wouldn't even allow them to sacrifice to Him nor recognize their attempts to atone for their sin
- Now look at Jesus response
 - In verse 2 He asked the crowd:
 - Do you think these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans because of the way they died?
 - Just by the way Jesus asked the question, we learn that the crowd had come to that very conclusion
 - The crowd had assumed that Galileans got what they deserved

- Why? Simply because of the circumstances of their death
 - Bad things happen to bad people
 - They had somehow brought this kind of tragic end upon themselves
 - To them, this relationship between righteousness and circumstances in life was an absolute rule
 - The Jewish culture in Jesus' day often saw bad things happening to people as Divine judgment for past sins
- This kind of thinking is wrong for at least two fundamental reasons
 - First, we diminish God's sovereignty
 - We suggest a cause and effect relationship between a person's life and God's plan for that person
 - This is a relationship that doesn't necessarily exist, or at the least, it's a premature judgment about God's ultimate plan for someone
 - Remember in John 9:2 when the disciples questioned Jesus about a man born blind?

[John 9:2](#) And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?"

[John 9:3](#) Jesus answered, "*It was neither that* this man sinned, nor his parents; but *it was* so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

- This exchange is so interesting because here we have a man born blind
 - So the disciples can't blame his condition on his own sin
 - So instead, they reach even farther back in time and assumed this man's condition can be traced to the sins of the parents
 - But look at Jesus' response then as we consider Jesus' response now
 - He says it had nothing to do with the sins of the parents

- Rather God made this man blind so that God’s mighty works might be displayed in him
- And Jesus then proceeded to heal the man of his blindness
 - Did you ever think about that?
 - For God to reveal Himself through His Son, He desired to have His Son perform miracles of healing
 - But before there could be an opportunity to heal, there must first be infirmity
 - And here Jesus says in no uncertain words that the various infirmities that He encountered were brought about by God to allow opportunity for God’s might to be shone through Jesus
- God, in other words, may choose to bring calamity, to bring illness, to bring “bad things” in order that He might receive glory
 - Does our view of God leave room for this truth of the Bible?
- What about at Job
 - In one moment he hears that all his children have died, all his herds have been taken and all but three of servants were killed
 - Later he suffers horrible physical ailments, again by God’s providence
 - Did it come because of some serious sin in Job’s life?
 - Even his friends tried to convince Job that his misfortune must have been because Job did something to anger God
 - But we know it wasn’t Job’s sin that brought the misfortune
 - It was his righteousness that caused it

[Job 1:8](#) The LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.”

- When bad things happened to Job, they came at the hand of the enemy, yes, but ultimately they came because God permitted them to happen

- After all, God was the first one to mention Job to the devil
- And God said the reason that the Devil should focus on Job was due to Job's righteousness
- Is our view of God big enough to accommodate the fact that sometimes God permits bad things to happen to good people merely because it brings Him glory?
- So the first problem with the crowd's thinking is they have cut God out of the picture and created a cause and effect relationship that isn't true – God alone sovereignly determines a man's steps

[Prov. 16:9](#) The mind of man plans his way,
But the LORD directs his **steps**.

[Prov. 20:24](#) Man's **steps** are *ordained* by the LORD,
How then can man understand his way?

- The second problem with their thinking is that it makes them a person's judge
 - When we decide someone's poor circumstances are due to their sin, we become the person Jesus was talking about when he said
 - Take the log out of your own eye before you take the splinter out of someone else's eye
 - Flip side...what's more, we have assumed that our own relative lack of misfortune must be because God is pleased with us
 - After all, if we were so bad, God would have brought similar calamity down on our heads too
 - Judging others always brings with it an attitude of superiority
 - Like the parable suggests – I must overlook my own mistakes in order to pick at someone else's
- The best way to avoid falling into the trap is to remember we all have sin and no sin is more worthy of punishment than another
 - None of us is any less deserving of God's displeasure – of God's wrath and ultimately of His judgment – than anyone else
 - We all equally deserve to suffer any fate God might choose to bring our way

- If Job, the most righteous man in the world in his day, could experience the calamity he saw by God's providence, then what should we expect?
- We can't make judgments about another person's standing before God on the basis of the events in their life
 - Missionaries that die in Africa
 - Martyrs in the early church
- And what about Jesus comments to the crowd in Luke 13?
 - Jesus says to the crowd in verse 3, I tell you no
 - Meaning, no, those men were not worse than other Galileans
 - They are not worse than you
 - Or said another way, you are just as sinful as they are
 - And unless you repent, you will likewise perish
 - Now did Jesus mean they too would die at the hands of Pilate while sacrificing at the temple?
 - Clearly not
 - But He did mean that just as these men and women met a tragic end in their sin, the crowd could likewise expect a tragic outcome at the end of their lives unless they repent and receive their Messiah
- In the next couple of verses, Jesus emphasizes his point further by bringing up his own example, probably another recent example from the headlines
 - In verse 4 Jesus talks about a tower that fell on 18 people in Siloam
 - This is a reference to the famous pool of Siloam mentioned in John 9
 - Apparently, a tower of some sort fell on visitors to the pool and 18 died
 - We know nothing more about this incident either, except what's mention here in the text,

- But Jesus draws a parallel to the moment and says when you heard about the 18 dying at the pool, did you assume they were worse than average sinners as well?
 - And again Jesus says that the crowd is no different than those people
- So it doesn't matter how their lives end
 - They could be killed by Pilate or have a tower fall on them or whatever
 - But all who go to their grave unrepentant of a sinful life lived apart from God will all receive a similar measure of judgment
- Do you see what Jesus is doing here?
 - It's been said that the thing that keeps most people from reaching heaven is that they aren't bad enough
 - People live their lives focused on the here and now and measuring their righteousness by what they see according to earthly standards of right and wrong
 - As long as we can find someone around us or in the news who lives a life more depraved, more disobedient and self-centered than our own, then we can feel good about ourselves by comparison
 - And then if we're not careful, we take it another step and begin to look at people who suffer tragedy and explain their tragedy as nothing more than a consequence of their sin – as just desserts
- When we do this, aren't we forgetting that we too are sinners
 - In God's eyes, were we to stand before Him and answer for our lives on the basis of our own actions, we would be found no less guilty than those who suffered worse misfortunes
 - It is only by His grace and Christ's sinless life that we can hope to stand in His presence and not come under judgment
 - The standard of righteousness is not whether we are worst than other people

- The standard is are we living a life less than God's holiness? Less than the example Christ gave us through His life? The answer for all of us is yes
 - So what are we to do about this dilemma? What are the people in the crowd to do in response to Jesus' comments?
- So, then Jesus calls upon them all to repent!
 - You can't believe in a Messiah until you believe you need a Messiah
 - Or said another way for you and I today, you won't ask to be saved until you believe you need to be saved
 - And the first step for a man or woman to come to faith in the Gospel is to recognize that they have sin and need for forgiveness
 - And Jesus commands them to take this step when He calls on them to repent
 - They are no better than the rest and they have as much reason to fear a tragic end to their lives as did the others
 - Not just in terms of the way they will meet their death
 - But more importantly, they have every reason to expect the judgment Jesus spoke about at the end of Chap 12 as all other sinners
- Consider the parable He gives in the following verses to make His point:

[Luke 13:6](#) ¶ 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.

[Luke 13:7](#) "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?'

[Luke 13:8](#) "And he answered and said to him, 'Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer;

[Luke 13:9](#) and if it bears fruit next year, *fine*; but if not, cut it down.'"