



With regard to the two incidents mentioned in Luke 13:1-5 – one to do with the killing of people in the Temple and the other about men who were killed when a tower collapsed on them – Jesus acknowledged that although the people who died were sinners, they were no more so than anyone else. From the nature of this acknowledgement, it is clear that he rejected a Jewish notion that their suffering was God’s punishment for personal wrongdoing. As Joachim Jeremias pointed out in his New Testament Theology,

in Lk 13:1-5, Jesus expressly attacks the dogma that misfortune is a punishment for the definite sins of particular people. Rather, suffering is a call to repentance, a call which goes out to all. Whereas his contemporaries asked, “why does God send suffering?” the disciples of Jesus are to ask, “for what does God send suffering?”

Jeremias goes on to say, ‘one answer would be, “God allows suffering, in order to summon people to repentance lest they suffer a greater catastrophe.”’

What catastrophe was being referred to? It would seem that Jesus had a strong prophetic premonition that, if the people of his day didn’t change, a time would come when



REPENT BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE

mass murder and destruction would occur on a grand scale (Cf. Lk 19:43-44). While this catastrophe was probable, it wasn’t inevitable. If the people, like those of Nineveh in Jonah’s time, accepted the Good News message about the in-breaking of God’s unconditional mercy and love, and turned back to him, disaster could be averted. However, if the people failed to respond, the forces of evil would inevitably take their destructive and inevitable course. Is it any surprise that Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Lk 19:41), when he could see that the chosen people were not responding to the Gospel message. As we know, the Lord’s warning was fulfilled a few years later. In 70 AD the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, demolished the Temple and murdered over a million people.

Surely, the Lord’s message in the Gospel has great relevance in these troubled and dangerous times. The Lord is saying to us, ‘even now return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity’ (Joel 2:12-15).

— Pat Collins



Reflection

God wants us to grow and produce the gifts of the Spirit and the fruits of love. Do we desire the same? Are we willing to join God in working out our salvation?



Lesson

Life is a gift and an opportunity for doing good and pleasing the Father, who is the origin of life.



Prayer

Lord, your patience is like that of the owner of the vineyard. With the assistance of the Holy Spirit guide us to true repentance that we might produce abundant fruit.

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
And with your spirit.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins ...

Showing the Eucharist to the people, the priest says:
Behold the Lamb of God, ...

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon (Cf. Ps 83:4-5)

The sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for her young: by your altars, O Lord

of hosts, my King and my God.

Blessed are they who dwell in your house, for ever singing your praise.

Prayer after Communion

As we receive the pledge of things yet hidden in heaven and are nourished while still on earth with the Bread that comes from on high, we humbly entreat you, O Lord, that what is being brought about in us in mystery may come to true completion.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

