Repent or perish

Luke 13:1-9

Key Verse 13:5

“**I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”**

Last Sunday we learned that Jesus came to kindle fire in our hearts. Now in today’s passage Jesus is kindling another fire. It is about ‘repent or perish’. “repent or perish” is another hot topic.

Do you know what is the meaning of repentance? Repentance means ‘change of our mind’ or ‘change of our thoughts’ as if we say “I change my mind” “I change my thought”. But I found that to change of our thought and action for even a small thing requires so much effort. I usually go to LA fitness in Downey landing for my exercise. There is one extremely kind maintenance. He smiles to everyone and greets everyone. And he himself is a happy guy. One day he even offered extra slipper for me to use in the swimming pool area. But about two months ago one day he was very displeased with me and told me, ‘No more of this wetting and dripping waters’ when I was coming to my locker room from shower room to dry my body. And I thought, “Why does he pick up on me?” “Shouldn’t they make a big notice and enforce everyone? Why does he want to enforce me alone”? You see, many times I have seen some people were using their towels in their shower rooms. But in my mind I believed that everyone was drying his body in his locker room. It is very interesting thing I noticed. What I believe in my heart is totally different from what I see. With my eyes I see people drying their bodies in their shower room but in my mind I believe everyone is drying his body in his locker room. But since I am a pastor and I do not feel good when I become judgmental and rebellious I forced myself a little bit and tried to accept his advice in my heart. But then mysteriously he met me again next day and he reminded me of it again. So I decided to change it once more. Finally it took about one week to change my thought about ‘drying my body in the shower room rather than my locker room’. Then I realized that I need to have extra bag to carry my towel to the shower room. Then I ended up ordering 3 bags from Amazon.com to find suitable bags. Then I ordered towels and everything was ready in two weeks. I fully changed my mind and accepted that I will dry my body in the shower room. But do you know what happened? I took my towel with me but I was coming back to my locker room with my towel in my bag in the shower room. I acted that way because of my old habit. So bringing my towel to the shower room did not change my action. After trying to remember and making same mistakes 2 or 3 times more finally I could change my one seeming small behavior, drying my body in the shower room rather than in my locker room. Wow! It took about 1.5 months for me to change my thought and action which was such a small thing.

Then think about it! How much more should I make conscious effort to change my thought about ‘repentance and perishing.” Do you know where I am getting at? How much more effort do I need to make in order to change my thought about ‘repentance’ and ‘perishing.’ So today we would like to listen to Jesus and change our mind and thought about repentance and change our actions. My message have two parts. Part I. Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners? (v.1-5) Part II. Leave it alone for one more year (v.6-9)

**Part I. Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners? (v.1-5)**

Look at verses 1-5. **Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. 2Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way?3I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. 4Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? 5I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”**

Everyone knows that he or she dies anyhow. We die naturally when we become old. Or we die unnaturally by evil people or natural disasters. Today’s passage shows two unnatural cause of death by evil man and natural disaster.

Some people told about the Galileans to Jesus. They were killed by Pilate and their blood was mixed with their sacrifices. So probably they were killed in the temple when they offered their sacrifices. We don’t know why they were killed by Pilate. But probably they were rebels against Roman government and Pilate must have killed them. But their death was very tragic because they were killed in the very place of their temple where they worshiped their God and offered their sacrifices. They were killed in the place where they believed were safe the most under the protection of their God.

Probably people who brought the story of the Galileans wanted to ask why they were killed in their temple when they brought their sacrifices. The word ‘answered’ in verse 2 shows that they must have asked a question or Jesus knew what they wanted to ask the question. The question was “ **Were these Galileans worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way?”**

Otherwise people who brought the question could not understand why the Galileans could have died in such a tragic and miserable way in their own temple in the sight of their God. What was Jesus’ answer? “I tell you, no”. Jesus clearly denied that these Galileans were not worse sinners than all the other Galileans although they suffered this way.” Why then did they die in such a miserable way? That was what they wanted to know. But Jesus did not answer the question. But rather he said, “**But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”** Jesus wanted to teach them the importance of repentance or perishing. He wanted them to change their thought from knowing whey the Galileans suffered this way to ‘repent or perish’. To know why the Galileans were killed in that way would not benefit them at all unless they repent. They were interested in the cause of other’s misery but Jesus reminded them of their own misery unless they repented.

Look at verse 4.

**4Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? 5I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”**

Obviously the tragedy happened for 18 people who died under the tower of Siloam. Jesus asked the question, “Do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?” Jesus said, “I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

Here ‘perishing’ does not perishing of our bodies. It refers to eternal perishing of our souls who will be separated from God eternally. The opposite of ‘perishing’ is ‘eternal life’. **John 3:16** reads, “**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** So the opposite concept of ‘perishing’ is ‘eternal life.’ So Jesus is talking about perishing of our souls who will be separated from God permanently.

In order to be saved and in order to receive eternal life they must repent. What should they repent? What should they change their mind and thought about? It is about Jesus and it is about their sin. First of all, they should change their mind and thought about Jesus. Instead of rejecting Jesus they need to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. About sin, instead of enjoying it they should change their mind to hate it.

Now changing their mind about Jesus is the most crucial. Why? Because salvation comes by God’s grace through faith in him. If we do not believe Jesus and accept him as Lord and Savior we will perish. So Jesus’ words ‘But unless you repent, you too will all perish’ means ‘But unless you believe in Jesus, you too will all perish.’

Now Jesus explains what is means about repentance and perishing through his parable.

**Part II. Leave it alone for one more year (v.6-9)**

Look at verses 6-9.

**6Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. 7So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’**

**8“‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. 9If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’”**

In this parable, there is a man, and another man who took care of the vineyard. The owner of the vineyard probably refers to God or Jesus, and the man who is in charge of the vineyard could refer to Jesus or other prophets and the fig free refers to man.

It is natural for a fig tree to bear fruit in 3 years after it grows up. I think in that passage, the fig tree had already grown up. So it should bear fruit and to bear fruit is very natural thing to do. But strangely it did not bear fruit for 3 years. So the owner said to the man, “**‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’** But the man replied. **8“‘Sir, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. 9If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’”**

One of Satan’s most powerful weapons is ‘you can repent tomorrow’. Since you are going to repent and give up your sin forever it is okay to enjoy just one more day.”

Repentance should never be delayed. Who knows even today the Lord may come and demand our life? So we should repent even now before being late.

Here “repentance” is compared to ‘bear fruit’ and ‘perish’ is compared to ‘being cut it down’. So ‘repent or perish’ means ‘bear fruit’ or ‘being cut down.’ So repentance means ‘bearing fruit’. What good is it if I change my mind to dry my body in my shower room and never change my action? That is why John the Baptist told his people, “produce repentance in keeping with repentance” (Luke 3:8)

Why can’t a man who did not repent bear fruit? Repentance means ‘change of our mind and thought especially about Jesus.’ So why can’t he bear fruit unless he repent? He cannot bear fruit unless he repent BECAUSE ONLY JESUS BEARS FRUIT. WE CANNOT BEAR FRUIT, BUT JESUS IN US BEARS FRUIT. Jesus said in **John 15:5**

**““I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”**

Since Jesus is the only one who can bear fruit that pleases God we cannot bear fruit unless we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

The key struggle for us is whether we still remain as our owner or Jesus becomes our new owner. If we are still owner of our lives we cannot bear fruit God is looking for. Only can we bear fruit God is seeking for only when Jesus becomes our owner.

That is why we cannot bear fruit unless we repent. Unless Jesus becomes our new ower we cannot bear fruit. Apostle Paul explained the same truth in **Galatians 2:20,** “**I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”**

So Apostle Paul’s owner is Jesus Christ who loved him and gave himself to him. Paul died by faith in Jesus so no longer he lives but Christ lives in him. Who is the owner? Jesus rather than Paul. That was apostle Paul’s repentance. So our main repentance also should be ‘to accept Jesus as our owner’. Then we can bear much fruit and we will not be cut down and perish.’ When Jesus became his owner it was impossible for Paul not to bear fruit. To bear fruit was so natural to Paul as if it is so natural for a fig tree to bear figs. Have you seen fig trees make so much effort to bear fruit? No, they just do so naturally. The same thing will happen to us.

In a vineyard if one tree does not bear fruit it should cut down because it only occupies space and use nutrition in waste. So it is proper for the owner who becomes angry.

But the steward was merciful and asking one more year. So the steward wants to dig around people and fertilize in order to help the tree to bear fruit. Jesus uses his servants to fertilize others. The best fertilizer is Jesus’ blood.

In conclusion, repentance means to change of mind and thought. We need to change our thoughts about Jesus and accept him as our owner and then we will bear fruit instead of being perish.

One word: But unless you repent, you too will all perish