

Judgmental Thinking Luke 13:1-5

A question as we begin our study of these precious words given to us here in this Book of Luke chapter 13. With sufferings of so many kinds taking place in our world today, in our neighborhoods, in our country, and especially in all the many war torn nations around our world, what is your first thought when you read or hear about those sufferings?

If our Social Media responses are any indication of the thinking and the responses of average people, then we can clearly see that even without really knowing all the real facts, we are quick to offer our opinions and our judgmental thoughts about those people and about their circumstances.

Social Media seems to have become the voice of this generation's conscience. And sadly, Facebook and Twitter and Instagram and TikTok and other media is filled to overflowing with that voice, people who know very little about the circumstances and the people being spoken about on any given day, but they are more than willing to offer their own "comments" and their "home-grown wisdom" about any and everything being discussed.

Lest I seem to be on a rant, may I stop and read some of the things that the Lord Jesus has to say about the way that we respond to the things we hear and see each day. And especially the care that we should exercise as we sense a "judgmental spirit" welling up within us.

And I'd like for us to carefully note within these words, that the Lord Jesus is teaching us two very important matters of character and behavior that He wants you and me to learn and to have within our own lives and within the responses that we give, that of "humility" and that of "repentance". While humility is not expressly mentioned in these words, it is foundational to the heart attitude that Jesus wants you and me to have.

And keep one important understanding in mind as we study these words. These gospels clearly tell us that Jesus always knew well the thoughts of the people around Him. And not only their thoughts, but also their motives and their purposes as they would present matters, such as these, to Him.

Listen, beginning in verse 1 of Luke chapter 13. We're told there that,

¹There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? ³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. ⁴Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:1-5)

Again, it seems that too often, most of us are quick to have and to express our own personal opinion about matters we hear about. And most often our opinion is from the prideful point of view that we know what is right in the matters we observe, while at the same time, judging other people to be wrong in whatever they are saying or doing.

But here, we see that the Lord Jesus is counseling us to be careful in our own attitudes and behaviors, and to especially be very careful with how we might judge the circumstances and the behaviors of other people.

As we consider this wisdom given by the Lord Jesus as He speaks about the deaths of these Galileans that Pilate had killed in the sanctuary and the people who died when the Tower of Siloam fell on them, there seems to be an errant tendency within people's minds to form thoughts and opinions about people and circumstances without their really knowing much about what really took place.

It's our understanding that the common mindset and teaching within the Jewish leaders of that day was that good behavior brought good health and prosperity to a person, but bad behavior brought retribution from God, that if these people spoken about here were suffering, they were probably getting their just recompense for some wrong behavior.

And while that could possibly be true, it's not always. Bad things can happen to good people for any number of reasons. God truly is sovereign and He is providential in His governing of our world. And everything that takes place is not simply "cause and effect" in the way that we might think it to be.

Here in His words, Jesus was confronting these people about their wrong and judgmental thinking. And He was giving them warning about it. He wanted

them then, and also you and me now to know that as He governs the affairs of this world, many of the circumstances that take place will not fit our usual form of understanding, and especially will not fit our “judgmental rationale”.

And again, this counsel being given by the Lord Jesus was not just words of wisdom and advice for the people of His day. We in our day have the very same kinds of mindsets.

And unfortunately, too often we seem to even take pleasure in that kind of thinking. We like to see the “bad guys” get their deserved punishment.

Recently, as I was watching a YouTube report of an incident of road rage, the offender was immediately involved in a car wreck because of his reckless behavior. The narrator chuckled as he used the phrase “instant karma.”

While I don't believe in the pagan religious meaning of the term “karma”. I do understand their implied meaning. We in our southern culture use the expression, “they just got their comeuppance”, or “what goes around comes around”.

And yes also, it is true that there are times and circumstances in which God will immediately and swiftly bring forth strong consequences for wrongful acts and behaviors. He tells us in Galatians chapter 6 that “a man reaps what he sows”.

And also, words like those in Hebrews 10 confirm it in our minds. There we read,
³⁰For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” ³¹It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:30-31)

So then, yes, these words, and other words like them sound as if God is willing to discipline His people even right at the moment of their disobedience. But may we hasten to know that just as often, and perhaps even more often, it seems that God simply allows time and circumstances and the effects of failed behavior to bring about their own form of corporal punishment, His divine system of “cause and effect”.

But again, God is not as predictable as we might want to think Him to be. And He often catches us off-guard with His response.

Here in today's scripture passage, some people were concerned about those very questions, and they were asking Jesus about them. Verse 1,

¹There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. (Luke 13:1)

While we don't know much about this incident, we do know that there were pockets of rebellion taking place by the Jews against their Roman rulers. And the Roman response was usually very swift, painful, and intended as an object lesson for others who might want to try to rebel against their authority.

On this occasion, the Romans went beyond their usual brutality and chose to mock the Jews by defiling a religious ceremony taking place, intentionally mixing the people's blood in with the blood of a ritual sacrifice. And not being believers in the One True God, it didn't bother the Roman soldiers at all to defile the Jewish religion.

And frankly, it would be no different for you or me if we had the same opportunity. While we would not be involved in killing someone, the pagan ceremonies within most of the heathen religions, Muslim, Hinduism and Buddhism, and others are of little or no concern to us.

I think of the way that I am instantly repulsed when I hear the sounds of the "call to worship" given several times a day in the Muslim communities, that bellowing sound ringing out over loudspeakers, calling out to the Muslims to come to their Mosques or at least to get alone and kneel on their "prayer cloths" and pray their heathen prayers.

Again, while we probably would not do anything violent, it really would not bother us to insist that they go pray somewhere else other than around us.

May I pause here for a moment and repeat something I mentioned a moment ago. In this circumstance that we're considering here today, we need to always remember that the Lord Jesus does not just make assumptions about what people are thinking. He is "Omniscient". He knows exactly what every person is thinking, those people then, and also you and me now. He knows every thought and attitude that takes place inside the depths of our hearts and minds. And He knew exactly what those people who brought this question to Him were thinking.

And He immediately moved the conversation from the emotion about the specific incidents to a consideration of each person's own individual soul. Here, in verse 2,

² . . . Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all *other* Galileans, because they suffered such things? ³ I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. (Luke 13:2-3)

Here, without addressing the vile behavior of the Romans, Jesus immediately moved the focus of attention back to His own people, the Jews, and specifically, in this first response, to the Galileans, His own hometown people.

And here, we can see that Jesus clearly understands the way our minds are made, the manner in which we can wrestle with the circumstances of a matter and how we can come up with wrong conclusions. So, He immediately asked the question,

² . . . "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all *other* Galileans,(Luke 13:2)

Here, Jesus was speaking to that inherent mindset that resides within most all of us, those "judgmental thoughts" that assume that those people must have been doing something really, really wrong, and they must have gotten what they deserved.

In modern day incidents, such as those involving a "drug deal gone bad", and some of those involved getting killed, we say in our minds, they probably got what they deserved.

Here in this passage, even though this incident seems far more innocent, as we said a moment ago, the mindset of the ordinary Jew of that day was to assume that those who suffered had done something wrong and that is why God would allow the Romans to mistreat them so badly."

Perhaps they assumed that as Galileans, they had been performing their sacrifices in some "high places" and not in the temple in Jerusalem, as they were supposed to do. And because of that, God brought a deserved punishment to them through Pilate's soldiers.

And you'll recall that in the Book of Job how in the midst of some of the worst suffering any person could ever endure, over and over again Job's three friends cast accusations at him saying, "You must have done something really wrong for God to be punishing you in such a way." "And also, Job, your children must have been doing the same kinds of wrong things, because look what God did to them."

Here in His words, Jesus didn't address the specific sins of the Galileans. He simply asked if their sins were any worse than the sins of other Galileans. And then He immediately turned the people's eyes back upon their own selves and upon their own sins. He said,

² . . . "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all *other* Galileans, because they suffered such things? ³I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. (Luke 13:2-3)

Jesus needed for those people then, and for you and me now to turn our thoughts away from the "blame game" that so often enslaves our minds and our emotions.

Here, Jesus was telling those people then, and subsequently, you and me now, that it is not up to us to determine all of the innuendos of every wrong thing that takes place around us each day. Our first responsibility is with the sin that lies within our own souls. And further, that unless we repent, we will likewise perish.

And then, to accentuate His instruction even further, Jesus brought up a similar tragic incident of loss of life, this one obviously accidental and not caused by those who died. But again, knowing their thoughts, Jesus was aware of how some of them were still judgmentally blaming those people for their own deaths. And He asked in verse 4,

⁴Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all *other* men who dwelt in Jerusalem? (Luke 13:4)

And then, Jesus immediately gave the same admonition, "I tell you, no, but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

Again, as I mentioned a moment ago, sometimes it really is "cause and effect" taking place. And it is especially written into the laws of God for such responses to sometimes take place, but again, not always, not always.

But whatever the cause of the suffering, Jesus was pointing out here that our focus does not need to be drawn to the possibility of sin within those other people. But rather, our attention should be upon the sin that lies within our own souls, our own nature, our own behaviors.

And in Jesus' call to repentance, He is calling us to understand that yes, there is sometimes a "cause and effect" response to wrongdoing, but more importantly, the real recompense for sin will come from Him, and that recompense on the Day of Judgment.

This is a very, very important concept for us to understand, especially for those of us who trust in Jesus as our Savior and Lord. He himself has taken all the punishment for our sins. We will not perish eternally for our sins because He has paid all the penalty that will be required of us.

But as He tells us here, we need to humbly recognize the position we are in. As observers of the behaviors of other people, we do not sit in a position of judgment. We have no authority to evaluate their behaviors and to make decisions of judgment about them and about their behaviors.

Yes, because the Lord Jesus lives within us, His Holy Spirit speaks to our spirit making us to know when someone is behaving sinfully. But our response to that knowledge is not to be judgmental. Jesus Himself will take care of that part.

Our part is to first look humbly within our own heart and make sure that we ourselves are not guilty of the same kind of unbelief and sin. As we are told in 2 Corinthians 13,

⁵ Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. (2 Corinthians 13:5)

And then also, with great humility, we really need to withhold judgment about those that have suffered and to instead pray earnestly for them.

Folks, "humility" is so very important to the Lord Jesus. Here in this circumstance that He's speaking about, where some Galileans were killed by Roman soldiers and others had a tower fall on them, condemning thoughts about those people will surely almost always come from a "heart of hypocritical pride", condemning them for some assumed behaviors, while thinking highly of ourselves, thinking

that we would surely not do sinful things as those other people must have done. That is “Hypocrisy and that is Pride”!

In the Book of Philippians, the Lord admonishes us to always be humble, to have humble hearts that think highly of others. He tells us,

¹If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

⁵Your attitude of heart should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 2:1-5)

So then, knowing this to be true, may I say all this again to us. First of all, we must understand that the Lord Jesus' words here are intended for you and me, personally. That when and as we get caught up in conversations with our friends about some event or matter that has taken place and we feel compelled to offer our opinion. Or if it is our custom to follow stories and reports in Social Media, Facebook, Tik Tok, and others, and then offer our own opinions and comments about those matters, may I strongly, strongly caution us to reconsider our own habits.

These simple words from the Lord Jesus really are speaking a strong warning to each one of us about our judgmental thoughts and judgmental behaviors, especially our incessant willingness to offer our own judgmental opinions and comments. Here, Jesus is telling you and me,

⁵ . . . I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:5)

And as we examine our own hearts, may we do as the Lord Jesus instructs us here and pray a “prayer of repentance”, saying,

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! (Psalm 139:23-24)

Amen! And Amen!

Let's pray!

