

responses. However, a few people did point out rightly that difficult circumstances in life – like “Tragedy” and “Loss” can also lead people to consider placing their faith in Jesus.

In the Bible passage we’re going to look at today, we’re going to consider one additional reason why people look to Jesus that wasn’t specifically mentioned by any of us, and that’s the fact that we often look to Jesus when we are looking for ANSWERS in life. We’re going to read through Luke chapter 13, and we’re going to break this chapter up into four different sections for our purposes today.

Luke 13:1-5

1 At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? 3 No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. 4 Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? 5 No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did."

We first need to understand what these people were talking to Jesus about. Some people in the crowd brought up two different situations in which innocent people died – and they wanted Jesus to explain WHY DID THIS HAPPEN? This is very much like we turn to God sometimes when something terrible and tragic happens, and we want to yell at the top of our lungs, “WHY, GOD? WHY DID THIS HAPPEN?!!!”

We don’t have to think too hard to come up with our real-life examples: Hurricane Ian. War in Ukraine. Or floods and fires in just about every corner of the globe.

The first situation that was mentioned is something that scholars haven’t found much background information about. There was a separate instance when Pilate, the Governor, sent undercover soldier into a crowd of Jews who were protesting the use of Temple funds that were being used to fund the building of an aqueduct. The undercover troops then slaughtered those that were protesting to end the uprising. But we don’t think that’s exactly what is being referred to here. However, this is a situation where someone evil causes harm to others... to people who don’t deserve to be harmed. We can tell that the people in the crowd are asking the age old question that we continue to ask: “God, when something bad happens to someone, is it because you’re punishing them for their sinfulness?”

And in the second situation, we see more of what our insurance companies would classify as “an act of God” if you will. For no apparent reason, a tower fell and killed 18 innocent people. Again, the question: “Why, God? Why?”

2,000 thousand years ago and today, one of the things that turns us toward Jesus is our search for answers. And in these two cases, to make sense of life when bad things happen. We want to figure out what could have been done to avoid the tragedy... and we sometimes get sucked into

the trap of “be a better person” and God won’t punish you like everyone thought God punished those who died in these situations.

But Jesus lets everyone that is listening know that they’re off base... that they’re not looking at these tragedies from the right perspective. They’re asking the question WHY?, but Jesus doesn’t answer that question. He tells everyone that’s listening the same thing that he’s telling us today: “If you are really interested in the things of God, then do one thing – REPENT!”

And that leads him to tell a story...

Luke 13:6-9

[6](#) Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. [7](#) So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?" [8](#) He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. [9](#) If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.' "

So Jesus followed his double warning to “Repent, or you will perish” with this parable... a story with a hopeful point. A man was ready to get rid of his fig tree because it hadn’t produced fruit as he wanted it to. It hadn’t fulfilled it’s purpose or calling in life, to put it in human terms. But the gardener, a sympathetic person of grace spoke up: “Let me give it some attention. Give me a chance to nurture it... to help it have what it needs to thrive and grow. If that doesn’t change things, then sure, go ahead and cut it down.”

Jesus is pointing out that we all have a limited amount of time to decide how we’ll live. To repent or not repent. Repent isn’t one of the words that showed up in our survey about what attracts people to Jesus. It’s not fun to talk about, but it’s essential for every one of us who is doing our best to follow Jesus.

If you grew up in Sunday School you may know that the word “repent” means to “turn away from” sinfulness and to turn to God. My working definition is this: “to stop living for myself, and to start living for Jesus... for the purpose God has given me in life.” Just like that fig tree wasn’t fulfilling it’s purpose by not producing fruit and its owner would be justified to cut it down, my life can easily be void of God’s purpose and meaning if I don’t live out my calling... what God has created me to do.

And now we move from what Jesus was teaching about, to what he practiced and did. Kind of like transitioning from sitting down in a classroom and learning from a teacher or a textbook, to moving to the lab where you actually get your hands dirty and try out what you’ve been taught.

Luke 13:10-13

[10](#) Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. [11](#) And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. [12](#) When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said,

"Woman, you are set free from your ailment." [13](#) When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God.

Jesus saw the woman's need, had compassion on her, and got involved. He didn't get trapped – like we sometimes do – by asking questions about what's not really important: He wasn't focused on what people thought. He wasn't focused on how sinful she was or what had caused her to be in this condition. He wasn't focused on any of that. He was focused on putting what he believed into practice.

He cared about this woman, and he helped her. That's something that attracted people to Jesus back then, and that's something that we – as the church – can still do today.

But when we do that, there are all types of traps that can arise and distract us from what's really important. Just like it was for Jesus...

Luke 13:14-17

[14](#) But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day." [15](#) But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? [16](#) And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?" [17](#) When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

The Christian life – and by that I mean following Jesus every day – isn't as complicated as we make it out to be sometimes. It's about loving God and loving people. And a big part of loving people is when we see someone in need, do what we can to help them in the name of Jesus. When we do that, when we simply live out a repentant life that is focused on loving God and loving others, that leads to what we see in the final part of verse 17: "...the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he (Jesus) was doing." And that's the kind of church that people are drawn to today.