

It's been almost 18 years since the terrorism attacks on our country that brought down 2 skyscrapers and killed thousands of Americans. It's been almost 14 years since hurricane Katrina wiped out much of New Orleans.

After those events we heard things from the media, and others like: *The US is being punished, too much sin in this country. Abortion, homosexuality, all kinds of sins, that's why the attacks happened.* And even preachers who said New Orleans deserved it because of all the sin that goes on there.

So, what do you think about these explanations about why bad things happen? Why bad things happen to good people. After awhile don't our ears and our hearts get deaf to them? Don't we just assume people are talking nonsense?

Today, Jesus gives us the answer to well intended people trying to explain and justify why terrible things happen; you might be surprised at his answer. His answer points to a place that often surprises us.

Verse 1 **There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.** You see what was going on; the Galileans had gone to the temple and they were offering their sacrifices to the Lord.

Pilate who was wicked and evil sends his troops to murder the Galileans during their offering of sacrifices, so the blood was mingled.

You can only imagine how tragic it must have been, and how the people dealt with it and asked the question: Why did this happen? Jesus answered and said in verse 2: **"Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way?"**

Isn't that how we think, when bad things happen to people? *Well they had it coming, they deserved it, and God is punishing them.* Jesus says, NO! I TELL YOU, NO. What is Jesus teaching us? Sin is the great equalizer. The wages of sin is death. Everyone dies.

There is universal guilt, but there is more: Jesus not only teaches us that there is no ranking of sin, or levels of sin, he says in verse 3, **NO, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.**

What? Dare we ask a question about why bad things happen to seemingly good people? Jesus answers the question and takes our focus away from what's happening in New York and New Orleans and forces us to look Where? In the mirror--to look at ourselves.

The people go on; or those 18 whom the tower in Siloam fell on and killed; a terrible tragedy. Do you think they were worse offenders than all the others in Jerusalem? Jesus says; **NO, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will likewise perish.**

The bottom line when these tragedies happen (whatever the tragedy) Isn't it a question of fairness? *It's not fair that this should happen; he's a good person, how come he was in a car accident?*

She's a great lady, how come she has cancer? They're great people why did this happen to there family? It's just not fair! Don't you have thoughts like that?

Jesus is teaching us today--that the life of a Christian is a life of repentance. A constant call to live in repentance. To repent is to be sorry for our sins and to have faith that God can and will forgive us. Thesis 1 that Luther nailed to the church door says;

The life of a Christian is a life or repentance! Not a theology of glory; sort of a divine karma that's so popular today--*If you're a good person than good things will happen to you, if you're a bad person then bad things will happen to you.* NO! it doesn't work like that!

Rather a theology of the Cross where we see the reality of sin in our world. Sin by Satan himself and the world we live in. Sin that lives inside of us; our old Adam that is trying to tear us away from God's kingdom to an eternity in hell.

God calls us to repent and to look to the only Savior from our sin; the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. To drive it home Jesus tells a parable about a fig tree, he teaches us about the nature of God in this parable. **"6And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none.**

That's usually what you do after you plant a fruit tree, you eventually look for fruit. The man planted a fig tree and he went to the tree expecting some fruit, but he found none. it begs the question: If a fruit tree never produces fruit, is it really a fruit tree?

Jesus continues in verse 7 **And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?'** This tree is doing nothing but taking up soil and water. Cut it down!

Friends in Christ, aren't we just like the gardener? How easy and quick we are to condemn, and to pass judgment. How quick and easy we are to remove every drop of patience and mercy from the fiber of our being.

But now comes the Gardner (the vinedresser), what does the vinedresser do at the potential of losing his job? he says **NO!** he becomes the go—between; he becomes the intercessor; he begs for mercy on behalf of the unproductive, fruitless fig tree.

In verse 8, he answered him, "**Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. 9Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.**"

The vinedresser teaches us mercy; mercy is not what we know or deserve. The vinedresser teaches us intercession; going to someone else on behalf of another. The vinedresser teaches us patience.

We look around at the world and we see the sin of the world; but seldom so we see our own sin. God wants us to look in the mirror--sin is universal. be concerned first and foremost about your own sin. Look at your own life--what kind of fruit are you producing?

Are you producing fruit in keeping with repentance? Are you producing Fruit in being sorry for your sin and having faith in the one who can forgive our sin?

Galatians 5:19-21 teaches us alot about fruit. the fruit of sin, the fruit of wickedness, the fruit of the flesh. Now the works of the flesh are evident: Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries dissentions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

As we examine our life, many times instead of good fruit, we produce bad fruit that needs to be repented of; but often we pretend that bad fruit doesn't really matter, or it won't corrupt the good fruit.

God wants us to find the true fruits of repentance: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such thing there in no law.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, when God comes looking for fruit on this fig tree, many times he finds none and sometimes instead of good fruit, he finds only bad, and on a good day it's a little good fruit mingled in with alot of bad.

What deserved to happen to this fig tree, is that a divine axe should be brought out and this fig tree be chopped down at the base and be cast into the flames of hell.

But instead, the vinedresser, Jesus himself says: **NO Father! NO!** Wait, be patient with him and I'll take the heavenly manure of my Word the Gospel and I'll work it around his roots and I'll feed it and water it, and I'll nourish it, and I'll care for it, but more than that instead of him being chopped down at the roots and cast into the fire--**Do it to me.**

Do it to me--I am the vine, said Jesus, chop me down at the roots instead of him. I will die his death. I will pay his penalty. I will be exalted on the tree of the Cross. I will give him mercy and grace. I will give him love and forgiveness.

I will give you all these things and more. Don't be worried about other people's fruit, but look in the mirror, Ask God for forgiveness for the lack of good fruit. Thank God for the gift of Jesus—the true vinedresser who lays down his life only to pick it up again.

Jesus who dies our death and gives us new life, He pours out his good fruit in the life sustaining waters of Holy Baptism, he continues to feed us with his body and bread in and under the bread and wine.

Rejoice in Jesus because he died for you. Rejoice in his sacrificial love for you today and forever. Amen