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PRESIDENT'S LETTER - APRIL 07

Let Us Heed Jesus' Holy Week Call to Repentance **Luke 13**

Human logic tainted by sin concludes that if things go well for me it is because I earned it or deserved it. It concludes that if something bad happens to someone else that they had it coming. This logic leaves us empty and helpless.

It was no different in Jesus' day. Jesus was told about some Galileans who had been murdered by Pontus Pilate. What made it even worse was that these Galileans were killed while they were offering sacrifices in the temple. Or what about those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them. The conclusion of the human notion "You get what you deserve" is that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans or that these eighteen at Siloam were more guilty than everyone else living in Jerusalem.

Jesus' answer is different and emphatic. No way! I tell you, no! This is not the God of the Scriptures. This not the God of grace and mercy and salvation. This is not the God of the cross and the empty tomb. Instead Jesus says that these things are a warning and a call to repentance. The Greek word "metanoeo" means a change of mind and heart. It is an acknowledgment that we have sinned against God. It is also a change of mind from being against God to loving God. This repentance can only be produced in human hearts by God through the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus emphasizes the importance of repentance as the only escape from a fate worse than befell those Galileans killed in the temple or the eighteen killed by the falling tower. The cross and the empty tomb turn everything upside down.

Jesus would have think about our lives this special week in the church year. We are not able to take care of ourselves or take credit for the good things in our lives. Our relationship with God is broken because of our sinfulness. Nor does God punish us with bad things in our lives because we are worse sinners than others. These things happen in a sinful world. Every violent or accidental death reminds us of the necessity of repentance. Every blessing of health and family should remind us of the importance of knowing Jesus and His salvation. Let us turn from sin to righteousness. Let us turn from seeing God as someone who needs to be bribed with good works and punishes us to seeing God as a loving Father Who forgives us our sins and has prepared an eternity of heaven for His dear children. Let us turn from living for ourselves to living for Jesus. We are not better than others, but we are not worse. There is no difference for all have sinned and fall short. The tragic events of life should focus our attention on the need for repentance. Now is the day of salvation. Repent and believe in Jesus before it is too late. Listen to Jesus, "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

Jesus then told the following parable emphasizing the importance of repentance and bringing forth the fruits of repentance. This is a picture from the Old Testament regarding God's love and care for His Old Testament people. A man planted a vineyard. He cared for it, fertilized it, and watered it. After three years, he came seeking fruit. When he found none, he told his caretaker, "Cut it down, and burn it to the ground."

The meaning is clear. God is the owner of the vineyard. The vineyard is the Church or the people of God. Repentance is not simply an empty intellectual act. Repentance is a change of heart and life. Jesus said, "Bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance." Just as a fruit tree produces fruit so a Christian produces the fruits of faith in his life. These fruits of faith are the works produced by faith. They are also the evidence of faith in the heart.

Those trees which do not produce fruit are cut down. Those who claim to be God's people and do not bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance will also be cut down and rejected by God. This is what happened to the Jewish nation. God had done so much for them. The Jews were God's chosen people. Yet God finally took the promises from them and turned to the Gentiles. Do you think you or the CLC are any better than God's chosen people? God calls for repentance from you.

The keeper of the vineyard pleaded for one more year. This indicates that God is a God of mercy and patience. Jesus does not give up on you. The vinedresser asked for one more year to dig around it and fertilize it. But God's patience is not unlimited. After that the unfruitful trees would be cut down and cast into the fire.

These fruits of faith are produced because you are joined to Jesus, the true vine. These fruits of faith include a love for others more than self, patience and self-control, and a love for the Word of God. They include a life-style free from sexual immorality and the love of money. They center around the Gospel of the cross and the empty tomb.

Examine your lives and ministry in your calling as shepherds of Jesus' flock. Think about what is going on around you. Look at what is important to you. Holy Week is a time for repentance. Let us take the time for true, heartfelt repentance. Jesus warning is clear to God's Old Testament people, to His disciples, and to you. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

He is not here!
He is Risen!



John Schierenbeck

Mr. Ed Starke will be completing the second phase of his colloquy on Tuesday, April 17. Any comments should be directed to Pastor Dan Flesicher, chairman of the Board of Doctrine.

CLC Boards will be meeting April 16-17 in Eau Claire, WI. The CC will meet April 18-19. The Call Committee for graduates will meet Wednesday, April 18 at 7:00 pm in Ingram Hall. Any calls should be in the hands of the president by April 17. I will be Eau Claire April 15-19.

The Call Committee for a professor will meet April 18 at 6:00 pm. This calling is dependent on budgetary approval for the funding of the 13th professor. Any correspondence should be in the hands of the secretary of the Board of Regents, Pastor Ted Barthels, by April 17.

Pray that the Lord's will be done as the Boards and CC meet. We ask for wisdom and patience from above.