

Good morning! Years ago, Harold Kushner published a book entitled, When Bad Things Happen to Good People. As you might imagine, it was a runaway bestseller. If we were asked, most of us would deny it, but most of us believe, whether secretly or openly-, that bad things really happen to bad people and when these bad things happen to people it is actually their fault. If someone we know has a child who is acting up we blame the parents. When financial ruin comes, we blame the one suffering the loss. When someone goes through a series of bad things happening we wonder if God isn't trying to straighten him or her out. All of us experience bad things though, don't we? This morning, let's look together at a passage that we don't usually think of in this way----but Jesus has something to say to us on this subject:

About this time Jesus was informed that Pilate had murdered some people from Galilee as they were offering sacrifices at the Temple. "Do you think those Galileans were worse sinners than all the other people from Galilee?" Jesus asked. "Is that why they suffered? Not at all! And you will perish, too, unless you repent of your sins and turn to God. And what about the eighteen people who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them? Were they the worst sinners in Jerusalem? No, and I tell you again that unless you repent, you will perish, too."

Luke 13:1-5

I recently learned the context of this passage from writings by Josephus. According to Josephus (The Jewish War 2:175-177), There were bands of Jewish rebels that hid out in the hills of Galilee that would occasionally attack Roman garrisons. At any perceived Roman injustice, these Galileans would protest and the protests often turned violent. On this occasion, they had learned that the Roman governor Pontius Pilate had taken money out of the Temple treasury to fund a water project. There wasn't enough fresh water in Jerusalem, so Pilate decided to build a new aqueduct from the Pools of Solomon to the City and since this project would benefit the Jews, he thought they ought to pay for it. Using Temple money this way angered the Jews so they staged a protest. Meanwhile, Pilate had his troops disguise themselves and sent them into the crowds with clubs under their robes.

At a signal from their commander, they began beating the people around them and dozens of Jews were killed, both agitators and innocent bystanders. In today's passage, some of the people had mentioned the incident to Jesus and asked Him to comment on it. What they were suggesting was that the Galileans who were killed had died because they were wicked. Jesus rejected this way of thinking: listen to what He said: "Do you think those Galileans were worse sinners than all the other people from Galilee? Is that why they suffered? Not at all! And you will perish, too, unless you repent of your sins and turn to God." Please listen: we live in a fallen world. Bad things happen. Disasters happen...they happen to everyone. These tragedies should remind us that life is short and we may leave this life and enter eternity at any time. You and I must keep short accounts with God. All of us need to repent! How about you this morning? Today may be a good day to ask yourself and God this question: Do I need to repent this morning?