

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
February 28, 2021

Greetings brothers and sisters in Christ.

Here is information about how to set up an appointment for a COVID vaccine using the phone.

Tower Health 484-659-3000  
Office of the Aged 610-478-6500

If you have prayer request, please send them to me so that I can include them in my weekly newsletters.

Yours in Christ, Pastor Denise  
Home Phone 610-750-6432 Cell/Text Phone 610-858-8187

**Luke 13:1-9, 31-35**

A reading from the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke beginning at the first verse.

**13** <sup>1-5</sup> About that time some people came up and told him about the Galileans Pilate had killed while they were at worship, mixing their blood with the blood of the sacrifices on the altar.

Jesus responded, “Do you think those murdered Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans? Not at all. Unless you turn to God, you, too, will die.

And those eighteen in Jerusalem the other day, the ones crushed and killed when the Tower of Siloam collapsed and fell on them, do you think they were worse citizens than all other Jerusalemites? Not at all. Unless you turn to God, you, too, will die.”

<sup>6-7</sup> Then he told them a story: “A man had an apple tree planted in his front yard. He came to it

expecting to find apples, but there weren't any.

He said to his gardener, 'What's going on here? For three years now I've come to this tree expecting apples and not one apple have I found. Chop it down! Why waste good ground with it any longer?'

8-9 "The gardener said, 'Let's give it another year. I'll dig around it and fertilize, and maybe it will produce next year; if it doesn't, then chop it down.'"

31 Just then some Pharisees came up and said, "Run for your life! Herod's got your number. He's out to kill you!"

32-35 Jesus said, "Tell that fox that I've no time for him right now. Today and tomorrow I'm busy clearing out the demons and healing the sick; the third day I'm

wrapping things up. Besides, it's not proper for a prophet to come to a bad end outside Jerusalem.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killer of prophets, abuser of the messengers of God!

How often I've longed to gather your children, gather your children like a hen,

Her brood safe under her wings—  
but you refused and turned away!

And now it's too late: You won't see me again until the day you say,  
    'Blessed is he who comes in  
    the name of God.'"

The Word of the Lord  
Thanks be to God.

## Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. AMEN

Let us pray.

Holy One of mighty power,  
Your word is powerfully  
dangerous. Your word casts out  
demons. Your word heals  
incurable diseases. Your word  
devours empires. Your word  
transforms the fabric of the  
universe. Help us to stand in  
awe and fear of what your word  
is capable of doing. Give us  
courage to speak your word and  
wisdom to hear it, for the sake of  
the one whose very whisper can  
demolish sin, Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

As we walk on this road to  
Jerusalem with Jesus and his  
disciples, you can almost feel the  
tension rising as the disciples  
are constantly asking Jesus  
questions and in Jesus'  
responses, we hear he is  
continually trying to get them to

see life circumstances and life  
choices in a new light.

Jesus answers challenge his  
followers to see that being  
faithful to God takes some new  
ways of being in community and  
being in relationship to one  
another. And that they need to  
repent meaning not only to be  
remorseful for their actions, but  
to reorient their lives and turn  
toward God.

From the text two weeks ago,  
God, whose voice was heard from  
the cloud that surrounded told  
Peter, James and John told them  
that Jesus was God's beloved  
Son, and they were to listen to  
him.

And although Peter, James and John and the other followers may be trying really hard to listen to what Jesus is telling them as they asked their questions, Jesus answers never seem to be what they were expecting to hear, and it is so hard for them to comprehend what Jesus is telling them. And it seems to leave them more confused, more frustrated and more uncertain.

Last week, as they asked Jesus who was their neighbor, Jesus did not list the people or the nations with whom they have good strong relationships, but Jesus challenged them to go beyond their comfort zone and pushed them to love those who were different from themselves and their families, those who were considered foreigners or even enemies, and those who were considered unclean and unlovable.

This week, we hear the disciples reporting on some real bad actions that had been ordered and implemented by the Romans. The Romans had not just barged in and disrupted worship for the Galileans, but the Romans barged into their worship space and slaughtered them and then defamed their sacred sacrifice on the altar, by mixing the victims' blood with the blood of the sacrificed animals.

You would expect Jesus to be outraged by these acts of violence and defamation. And he probably was, but that is not how he responded to their reporting of this incident.

Instead of focusing on perpetrators of this violence and the defamation of the holy sacrifice. Jesus' answer focused on the victims, that is on the Galileans who had been brutally murdered while worshiping.

And not with regards to offering his condolences for the slain worshippers and their loved ones, but his answer challenged a common perception that was held by many Jews that if something bad happened to you or your family, you must have done something wrong to deserve it. And to have been part of a group that was slaughtered at worship, you must have really committed something horrific to suffer such a tragedy.

But Jesus tells them – that this is Not at All true. Bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people.

We certainly know that to be true from our own life experiences. Children get sick and die. Faithful and compassionate people get cancer.

And we have experienced so much of that this past year with the pandemic. Some people were exposed to the virus and never tested positive, and then others

who were exposed to the virus got so very sick and died.

So, what I hear in this morning's text is that we are asking the wrong questions and we are truly looking for answers in the wrong places. For example, we are trying to connect the actions of others to the challenges and tragedies that they suffer, in order to make sense of things that happen, in order to validate our own life choices to assure ourselves that those bad things could not happen to us or our loved ones. We are looking for security in places which Jesus tells us are not and will never be connected to the outcomes.

So as the voice from the cloud said to Peter, James and John – listen to him.

So, what is it that Jesus is telling his first century as well as his twenty first century disciples to do? –

Jesus is really straight forward as he tells us once again to repent. A word that we hear as to be sorry or remorseful. But Jesus was not talking about being remorseful as he bluntly states turn to God or you will die.

For turning toward God is where you will find your security, your peace, and your freedom. And turned toward God, you will find new and renewed life. The life that God has always intended for you. A life that reveals your purpose, your gifts and produces in you good fruit.

The good news that we hear in the second part of this morning's reading, is that God never gives up on us and is persistently working on us to turn us around.

It might not be pretty as God's digs around our roots to

untangle and remove whatever it is that has prevented us from being fed and nourished. And God prunes off the dead branches that are using up our energy that is needed to produce new shoots and buds. And God mixes in the nutrient rich manure into the soil that surrounds us so that we may be restored to health. God does whatever it takes so that we may produce good fruit.

Listen to him – and not just hear his words but be obedient to his commands as he tells us where to find the answers, where to find our purpose, and where to find our comfort and security.

Listen to Him

Turn to God, right here and right now and forever more.

AMEN

***Blessing***

May

The love of God,

The light of Christ,

And the joy of the Holy Spirit

Abide with you on this day

and forever more.

**AMEN**