

**Subject: *Man's Tragedies and God's Truth***

**Scripture: *Luke 13:1-9***

Try to imagine Jesus at a press conference after last week's mass shooting in Orlando. What would He say?

### **THE TRAGEDIES THAT SADDEN US**

The crowd told Jesus about the people of Galilee who were massacred by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate (vs. 1) while they were offering sacrifices. Jesus takes this opportunity to ask if they thought this happened as a special judgment for people who were really terrible sinners. Then he said that was not the case (vs. 3). Apparently people would often draw that kind of conclusion (Jn. 9:1-2). I suppose that some people felt like the people in that Orlando bar deserved to be killed or wounded last Sunday morning because they were worse sinners than anybody else.

Jesus then brought up another tragedy that everybody had heard about (vs. 4). A tower had collapsed and killed 18 people. Were they being judged because they were such terrible sinners? Jesus answered his own question. We need to be careful about making a direct connection between someone's suffering and their sin. All suffering and death can be traced to sin in Genesis 3. The wages of all sin is death (Rom. 6:23). But all suffering is not a direct punishment for specific sin and all tragedy does not mean that a person did something to deserve it. Job's friends made this mistake in judgment.

### **THE TRUTH THAT SHOCKS US**

Jesus said we must either repent or perish. That's not a popular message. Repent is a forgotten word in the church today. William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, was right on target when he made this prediction: "The chief danger of the 20<sup>th</sup> century will be religion without the Holy Spirit, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell."

A. W. Tozer said: "People on earth hate to hear the word REPENT. Those in hell wish they could hear it just once more."

- Repentance is a Biblical truth

The Bible stresses the need to repent. Repentance has always been at the heart of God's message to mankind. The Old Testament prophets demanded repentance. ***2 Chronicles 7:14*** *If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

The Great Commission is recorded five times (in each of the Gospels and once in Acts). In Luke we have the actual content or message of the Gospel: ***Luke 24:47*** *And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

- John the Baptist and Jesus both preached repentance

*Matthew 3:1-2*<sup>1</sup> *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,*<sup>2</sup> *And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

*Matthew 4:17* *From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Matthew 11:20* *Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not.*

- The apostles preached repentance

*Mark 6:12* *And they went out, and preached that men should repent.*

*Acts 20:20-21*<sup>20</sup> *And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,*<sup>21</sup> *Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

John MacArthur said: “Biblical Christianity has lost its voice. The church is preaching a gospel designed to soothe rather than confront sinful individuals. Churches have turned to amusement and show business to try and win the world. Those methods may seem to draw crowds for a season. But they’re not *God’s* methods, and therefore they are destined to fail. In the meantime, the church is being infiltrated and corrupted by professing believers who have never repented, never turned from sin, and therefore, never really embraced Christ as Lord or Savior. We must return to the message God has called us to preach. We need to confront sin and call sinners to repentance – to a radical break from the love of sin and a seeking of the Lord’s mercy. That is, after all, the gospel He has called us to proclaim.”

- Real repentance involves a true change of heart and life

Since repentance is an essential part of the Gospel message, it is not surprising that Satan has tried to remove it or deceive people with partial or false teaching. I recently asked someone who happened to be a Roman Catholic what he believed about repentance. He paused and said, “I’ve heard about penance, but I’ve never heard about repentance.” Many people have never heard the truth about repentance, so it is imperative that we know the truth and then tell others what God says about repentance.

Repentance is not penance or a religious act we must do to earn God’s favor. Repentance is not regret or remorse. Judas felt remorse, but he didn’t repent. Some people are sorry about the consequences of sin, but they are not sorry for their sin. Repentance is not resolution or trying to do better. To put it in simple terms, repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of attitude and ultimately a change of behavior.

- Real repentance involves a change of mind – The word repentance (Gk., *metanoia*) actually means a change of mind. When a person repents he changes his mind about sin, about God, and about Christ. But it must go beyond just a change of mind.
- Real repentance involves a change of attitude – The NT word for repent means to have a change of mind, but the OT word means to sigh, lament, grieve. It is a godly sorrow for sin, a brokenness over sin. **2 Corinthians 7:10** *For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.* Samuel Rutherford said: “A repenting man is more angry at his own heart for sinning than he is at the devil for tempting him.” But it must go beyond just a change of attitude.

- Real repentance involves a change of behavior – It is a turning away from sin and a desire to live for God. When a person repents, he is not only broken over his sin, he is broken from it.

We see all the elements of real repentance in the story of the prodigal son (Lk 15:17-20). Luke 15 tells us that God rejoices when a sinner repents (Lk. 15:7, 10).

- The time to repent is NOW

So the people would understand the urgency of their need to repent, Jesus told a parable in Luke 13:6-9. The time for judgment was long overdue. The people had not repented and their lives showed it. Jesus is looking for fruit, the only true evidence of real repentance. The choice is the same today as it was then...REPENT or PERISH.

The worst possible tragedy is not a massacre in a worship service, a tower killing 18 people or a shooting in Orlando that leaves about 100 people either dead or wounded. The worst tragedy is people who are not willing to repent and avoid eternal judgment in hell.