

Accidents Happen, Salvation Doesn't

Intro. “Did you hear the news?” is how many of us get news. Word of mouth is still probably the fastest way word of important as well as trivial events travels. We have a myriad of ways to get our news; some are fading, like a printed newspaper to be replaced by digital. Whatever our source of news, much of it seems to be bad. The people in today’s gospel bring such news to the Lord, looking for an answer.

I. The people who told the Lord about this event were clearly shaken and confused. They either witnessed the disturbing murder of Israelites during their worship sacrifice or heard about it as the news flashed from person to person. They wanted an explanation or reassurance that it was their own fault

they were killed. Then people could stop worrying and go on with their lives as if the tragedy never happened. The popular understanding in that time was bad things happened to bad people because they were bad, sinful. The Lord gave them other news of a tower falling on people. He reminded them that accidents happen all the time that make no sense and have nothing to do with sin. We all have friends and family who have been hurt or died in accidents or by disease. Most of the time we get no explanation, and I pray we don’t really believe it’s because they are sinners. Unfortunately, some of this misplaced judgment is still present today. Are the children, women and men being killed in Ukraine sinners? Of course not. But *sin* is certainly the cause.

The parable drives home the Lord’s point about the need for repentance: some trees take a few years to

mature and bear fruit, but if they don't, they are cut down to give space for a tree that *will* give good fruit.

Concl. As good as we *can* be, we all need extra care to encourage what Abraham Lincoln quoted in his Gettysburg Address as “our better angels.” It is a line from a book called *Barnaby Rudge* by Charles Dickens: “So do the shadows of our own desires / stand between us and *our better angels*, / thus their brightness is eclipsed.” [*Barnaby Rudge*, 1841]

“Our better angels” means the best part of us on our best day can do great things and even on some of our worst days. Unfortunately, our best part does not always show up, even on our best day. We are in constant need of repentance, a change of heart.

Accidents and natural disasters will happen. They should be wake up calls for us to repent now and

always be ready. The same end is for all of us whether through accidents, natural aging or the Lord's Second Coming. A burning bush could be a little scary. Lent is a much gentler wake-up call for us.

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