

Ezek. 33:7-20

1 Cor. 10:1-13

Luke 13:1-9

**Overview:**

***Jesus Calls You to Repentance***

*Repent or perish. These are the words of Christ. But there is much more to this passage than this warning. There is a backstory of love and kindness, similar to how a parent loves his child. We are called to turn towards God out of love for Him and every time we fail, He provides a second chance.*

**Lesson:**

The story of God's love for us has no beginning and no end and is poured out for us regardless of our past.

**Message:**

Remember when you were a child and you heard your parents call you? You could tell by the sound of your mom or dad's voice just how urgent the need was for you to respond. I perfected and fine-tuned my "Dad voice" over my 18 years of parenting and my children perfected and fine-tuned their reception of it. They were able to ascertain the exact urgency from just subtle nuances of my voice.

In today's passage we read something similar to a "Dad voice" but because it has been recorded in print, we cannot hear the level of urgency or other nuances in his voice, so we are left to opine. We read the chapter before and the passages after in search of a wider context that might aid in our understanding, but they don't offer few additional clues. There is nothing there that describes his mood or tone of voice.

Now, if you have ever listened to other sermons on today's passage you would have probably heard a very simple message: repent or perish: turn from your sin or spend your life separated from God for all eternity. Many times, these messages would be dark and include a thundering voice and even pulpit pounding. The pastor might even scare you into turning away from your sin and back towards God with vivid illustrations of Hell and damnation. The titles of these messages were usually categorized under "Fire and Brimstone" and they may not have been suitable for young ears. The sermons usually stop there and go no deeper than that message and that's really a shame because there is so much more depth to the passage.

To say that this passage is little more than a stern warning from Jesus to abandon sin is like saying that a father is simply using his "Dad voice" to warn his daughter not to touch a hot stove. At its core, that is what the father is doing, sure. But there is much more depth than that. Why does the

father speak with such urgency? Why does he raise his voice to capture her attention? Why does the father not wish her harm? Is it simply because this is his job and nothing more?

To better understand his statement, we must take a much wider view of the situation – all the way back to before the birth of this girl. Here we find a father in loving anticipation and then celebration over her birth. We see him over the few years providing for every one of her needs. We see him guiding her in all his ways. We see the unconditional love that he has for her.

And then, this one morning, we see his precious child begin to reach towards the open flame of that stove. His voice is not one of simple warning, of uncompassionate threat. No! It is a voice motivated by the deepest love. He doesn't call out his warning to scare her or force her to follow his command, but so that maybe, just maybe his voice can somehow reach her faster than he can and convince her to pull her hand away from the imminent danger that only he sees. This is the love that can be heard in his voice, and it's the same love that can be heard in Jesus'.

Let's read part of the passage again:

Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.

Jesus says that this tragic event and all of the suffering is not a judgement on the individuals but of his wrath against all sinful mankind. It is not a sign of God's judgement on specific people for specific sins, but as a sign of his judgement of all people. All must repent and believe that the kingdom has come in Jesus. He proclaims this with a sense of urgency and compassion that only he and God can fully comprehend.

Can you hear the love and compassion in his voice? He's calling out to them, and to us, in loving urgency to turn away from sin and turn back towards God. He is using his "Dad voice" because of his unimaginable love for us.

Like the father and the stove, Jesus refuses to stay quiet while we are heading towards danger that only he can see. He won't force us to listen and obey – he leaves that choice up to us – but he will give us every chance, every opportunity, every warning to turn ourselves away from sin and back into his arms.

He speaks this message with urgency because of His love for us. He uses these examples to remind us that we live in a broken, sinful world, and have no assurances that we will have time to repent before we are taken away. The Gentiles were suddenly killed in the raid. Were they living in repentance? Were they living facing towards God or turned away? For those in a state of separation it was too late to repent. But for us that are living, we still have time to turn towards God.

Also, just like the illustration of the child we can view this passage in a much wider context of God's relationship with us. The entire Bible teaches us of God's incomprehensible love for us. In Ephesians (1:3-8) we can find a summary of this much larger story. Paul writes:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup>For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup>he <sup>b</sup>predestined us for adoption to sonship <sup>a</sup>through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— <sup>6</sup>to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. <sup>7</sup>In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup>that he lavished on us.

This is God's love story with us, and it starts before the creation of the universe. Before God began his work, he already knew us and adopted us into a relationship with him through Jesus. And from the very first moment until now he has been watching out for us, guiding us, encouraging us, and even warning us – but all out of the deepest of love for us, his children. This is the message of today's Gospel – a message so much deeper than the words of repentance that are printed on the pages.

It is a living Word, full of divine power, and also full of divine love. It is a passage that the Holy Spirit uses today to warn us and encourage us. Stop reaching for the hot stove of money, power, and self-righteousness. Stop reaching for these, and other sins you may be living in or have committed and turn towards the "Dad voice" that is calling out to you. Regardless of how many scars you have God's Word promises you another chance.

Let's pray

Lord our God,  
Psalm 23 reminds us that you are our shepherd and provide everything I need. In green pastures you lay me down, nourish, and nurture me. You never leave my side. Even when I travel through the darkest valleys of my life, you walk with me. Lord forever I will be loved by you, even when I forget, even when I turn and reject you, and even when I just don't believe I'm good enough. I think you for your love, your kindness, and your tenderness. I pray that you continue to call out in warning when I begin to stray, and that you find and rescue me when I become lost. Lord, I don't deserve the love that you have for me and the effort you put into me, but I thank you for it because without that, without you, I would perish. Lord, continue to help me produce fruit for your glory and proclaim this good news throughout the world. In Jesus' name, amen.