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**Bella Vista Missionary Baptist Church**

**Bible Study**

**April 8, 2020**

**“What Is God Saying?”**

**Scripture Lesson:** Luke 13:1-9 (NRSV)

* Theology (the study of God) has been defined as faith seeking \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. While we can have confidence in the truth of God revealed specifically to us in Jesus Christ, our knowledge of God is not comprehensive (we don’t know everything about God). Part of the condition of our faith is that we only see and know God in part (1 Corinthians 13:12), and that condition is amplified when we face the reality of evil and suffering in the world.
* We as Believers affirm the sovereignty of God and God’s providential care of God over the world (**Psalm 24:1-2; Matthew 6:25-30; 10:30**; *“He’s Got The Whole World In His Hands”* challenge), but this affirmation of faith is tested by the existence of evil. When we come to the crossroads, we are now facing an issue of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. People who are seeking to know and understand God cannot avoid this question.
* **Theodicy** – How can we continue to affirm the sovereignty of God in the face of horrible occurrences? If God is both all-powerful and good, why is there so much evil in the world? Should I limit the power of God, reject the goodness of God, or deny the existence of evil?
* Today, many of us may be at a crossroads in our faith because we are facing the reality of a natural evil in the form of COVID-19.
* There are three (3) ways that Believers have traditionally responded to questions of theodicy:
* We highlight the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of God. We continue to live in faith with our unanswered questions. We recognize that God is a mystery, and we aren’t given the answers. **(Job 38-42)**
* We interpret our experiences as divine \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (for the wicked) or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (of the people of God). We believe that God handles the world in such way that the righteous and the wicked get what they deserve, if not in this life, certainly in eternal life.
* We see God using suffering as an opportunity for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ growth and awareness of our need to turn to Him. **(Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 12:7-9; Hebrews 5:8) \****God is speaking and teaching through the experiences that we have in life!\**
* What is God seeking to educate us on ***SPIRITUALLY*** during this COVID-19 situation, when people are suffering, in various ways, because of this natural evil? Let’s look at the text!
* Through the instances in the story (vs. 1-5), Jesus teaches some important principles about suffering:
* Jesus denounces any form of a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of sin as the cause.
* Human suffering is not *ALWAYS* the result of divine judgment.
* Suffering points to the need for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!
* What does it mean to repent?
* To think and live differently. It is a complete reorientation of your lifestyle that involves that confession of sin, the turning from sin, and turning to God!
* It is the recognition that we all have failed God in thought, word, and deed in what we have failed to do, therefore we must return to Him while there is time and opportunity!
* Repentance is not the same salvation, but it is integral in leading us to it!
* Through COVID-19, God is calling us to various levels of repentance **(2 Peter 3:9)**:
* **Ecclesial Repentance** – 2 Chronicles 7:14 (*My people…My name*)
* **National Repentance** – Acts 17:30-31
* **Political Repentance** – Proverbs 14:34
* **Personal Repentance** – 1 John 1:9

***“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts to us in our pain! Pain is God’s megaphone used to rouse a deaf world!”*** – C.S. Lewis

**Prayer of Repentance and Renewal**

Most holy and merciful Father, we confess to You that we have sinned against You by our own fault in thought, word and deed; by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as we have loved ourselves. We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven. We have been deaf to Your call to serve, as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit. We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness; the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience of our lives. Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people, our anger at our own frustration, and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves, we confess to You. Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work, we confess to You. Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to commend the faith that is in us, we confess to You. Accept our repentance, Lord, for the wrongs we have done, for our blindness to human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty. For all false judgments, uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice ad contempt toward those who differ from us, for our waste and pollution of Your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us. Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us. Accept our repentance, Lord andhear us, for Your mercy is great. Amen.