

Repentance Is to Be a Lifestyle, Not a One-time Event; It Is Not Linked Merely to Sorrows or Joys

"When bad stuff happens to people, is God behind it?" the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander asked rhetorically in his sermon Sunday. "Is it 'payback' of sorts?"

"Well, those listening to Jesus thought so," he said. "They took it for granted that the Galileans who were brutally murdered at the hands of Pontius Pilate and those who died at the collapse of the tower of Siloam committed a terrible sin which made them deserving of their deaths. In antiquity, it was common to believe that if you became seriously ill or suffered a tragic accident, it was because you had sinned and made God angry.

"Remember Job's counselors? Their philosophy was, 'Job, you've sinned, man! Come clean about it!' And remember the disciples who question Jesus in John's Gospel about the man born blind? They ask, 'Master, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'"

"We moderns may think we have outgrown this cruel logic, but it can still affect us. . . . Even though Jesus was crucified for doing the will of God, . . . we look around and see tragedy befall others, and we secretly wonder—if only for a minute—if they might have had it coming.

"And at that moment Jesus appears on the scene with some strong advice for us: Repent! Change and correct the way you are thinking. . . . Suffering and tragedy are not always God's payback for sin. For that matter, the fact that things may be well with us is not necessarily a sign of God's pleasure, either! . . .

"Rather than accusing others and implicitly congratulating ourselves for our greater righteousness, we would do well, says Jesus, to look within ourselves. Jesus' admonition to (p. 2→)



"The Wayfarer", by Hieronymus Bosch (ca. 1450-1516), Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam. © Web Gallery of Art. As with the prodigal son, about whom we'll hear Sunday, this painting shows the dangers of the world as being chiefly spiritual. The wayfarer's path—if he remains on it—leads toward a gate and the tranquil countryside beyond. The readings Sunday will speak of leaving the old life of spiritual bondage and shame and experiencing new life in the joy of the Lord.

Editor: Box 972, Boise, ID 83701. 208-336-3951, harbingermail@aol.com

Pastor: The Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander, epworthrector@msn.com

On the Web: www.epworthchapelonthegreen.org

Sunday

10:00 a.m.: Word & Table service

11:30 a.m.: Refreshments, conversation

11:45 a.m.: Post-service discussion.

6:00 p.m., 4/1: Lenten Evensong, with no tea or refreshments.

**We welcome donations for
The Harbinger.**

Tuesdays 5:30 p.m. and Thursdays 7:00 p.m.: Lenten Evening Prayers

Tonight, 7 p.m.: Psychological & Biblical Aspects of Forgiveness, NNU

Saturday, 3/17, 9:30 a.m.: Morning Prayers, then church cleaning & lunch

Readings, 3/18: 3/18: Josh. 4:19-24, 5:9-12; Ps. 34:1-8; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Luke 15:11-32. 3/25: Is. 43:16-21; Ps. 126; Phil. 3:8-14; Luke 20:9-19.

Prayer Emphases: Bolivia; Churches of Christ; University Christian Church, Los Angeles, CA, and the Rev. Scott Julian; those who minister to children in hospitals, pre-schools and orphanages; parishioners on York Street.

(Sermon, cont'd.) repent shows us that all of life is under God's judgment, not just what happens to people 'out there'. All of life is under God's judgment, and that means that each of us is called to live our whole lives in repentance and trust. Repentance is to be a lifestyle, and because of that, it is not linked merely to life's sorrow or joys. . . . (R)epentance, like faith, is not an isolated act. It is attitude, a posture of response in our relationship with God. It is ongoing. It is continual. It involves not only turning *from* specific actions and attitudes that are not God's will for us, but also a continual process of learning to see the world (as) God sees it" and learning to love as God does. "All of life is under God's judgment, and without repentance, everything and everyone is lost."