

1. Lenten Theme - Compassion
2. 3 Aspects of Compassion in the face of suffering
 - 2.1. Repentance leading to Clarity**
 - 2.1.1. Disasters
 - 2.2. Patience leading to New Life**
 - 2.2.1. Slow changes
 - 2.3. Tolerance leading to Respect**
 - 2.3.1. Unchanging and entrenched people and systems
- 3. Repentance (Luke 13:1-5)**
 - 3.1. Jesus mentions 2 disasters
 - 3.1.1. Pilate killing pilgrims on their way to a festival or in the Temple
 - 3.1.2. The collapse of the Tower of Siloam
 - 3.1.2.1. Both were well known events, given how Jesus presents them
 - 3.1.2.1.1. Think of the Tidal Wave in Sumatra, back in 2004
 - 3.2. Back in Jesus' day, as in ours, there are religious leaders who would say that both these events were the result of the sin of the people who were killed
 - 3.2.1. *"What did you do to deserve this? What sin did they commit that God would strike them down?"*
 - 3.2.2. Think of Pat Robertson saying the Tsunami in Sumatra was because God was punishing the gays and lesbians
 - 3.2.2.1. Jesus is confronting this attitude
 - 3.2.2.2. He says, *"Do you think you are less sinners than they?"*
 - 3.2.2.2.1. Jesus is saying, *"You have confused temporal, material accidents and acts of evil with eternal, spiritual things you have some control over."*
 - 3.2.2.2.2. If your concern is the eternal state of *their souls*, look to your own soul and repent
 - 3.3. Here, Repentance becomes a way to seeing events in the world clearly, reasonably, critically.
 - 3.3.1. Repentance is how we separate out temporary events from eternal states of being
 - 3.3.2. Repentance clarifies who we are in relationship to God
 - 3.3.3. Repentance dispels ignorance
 - 3.3.3.1. Allows us to see beyond bumper sticker theology and talking points
 - 3.3.3.1.1. Clement of Alexandria (from ANF Vol 2: Chap 3 - *The Objects of Faith and Hope Perceived by the Mind Alone*)
 - 3.3.3.1.1.1. *"Wise souls, pure as virgins, understanding themselves to be situated amidst the ignorance of the world, kindle the light, and rouse the mind, and illumine the darkness, and dispel ignorance, and seek truth, and await the appearance of the Teacher."*

4. **Patience (Luke 13:6-9)**

- 4.1. When Rhiannon was born, there was concern she would be a “*failure to thrive*” baby. She didn’t eat for 3 days after she was born. On top of that, she turned yellow because of high bilirubin.
 - 4.1.1. The doctors wanted to give her shots and get her into the hospital
 - 4.1.2. We asked, “*What is something we can do before we do that?*”
 - 4.1.2.1. The doctor said, “*Well, you can sit in the sun with her for several hours every day*”
 - 4.1.2.2. We did that and she got better quickly
 - 4.1.2.2.1. Patience was the intermediate solution to rapid and invasive interventions
- 4.2. We see a similar thing with the fig tree that is not producing in Jesus’ parable
 - 4.2.1. The gardener tells the landowner, “*Wait! Let me work WITH the tree*”
 - 4.2.2. The landowner represents the urgency of the way we think things should be
 - 4.2.2.1. We want things to match what we believe to be the “Right Way” right now
 - 4.2.3. But Jesus says, “*Wait. Let me work with him, with her, with them.*”
- 4.3. St Francis
 - 4.3.1. “*Hail humility with thy sister Patience*”
- 4.4. The ‘failure to thrive’ in the faith may be simply a matter of time
 - 4.4.1. The suffering that is happening for the fig tree and for the landowner is not a personal failure of the fig tree, but a matter of time and the landowner’s perspective of timing
 - 4.4.2. Jesus’, the Gardener’s, answer to the pressure to conform to the landowner’s idea of what is right for this particular fig tree is
 - 4.4.2.1. *Mercy*
 - 4.4.2.2. *Reconciliation*
 - 4.4.2.3. *The possibility of a New Life*
 - 4.4.2.3.1. **Ephesians 4:1-7** *I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. ⁷But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift.*

5. **Tolerance (Luke 13:31-35)**

- 5.1. In today’s culture, *tolerance* gets a bad reputation.
 - 5.1.1. “*I tolerate who you are and what you do*” is not acceptable
 - 5.1.2. But I want to suggest to you that *tolerance* is a first step towards working well with other people
 - 5.1.2.1. If reconciliation, getting along with people you disagree with, and relationships matter to you, then you have to get on the staircase in the first place
 - 5.1.2.1.1. Tolerance is the first step toward knowledge, respect, understanding

5.1.2.1.2. Henry Louis Gates

5.1.2.1.2.1. *“The first step toward tolerance is respect, and the first step toward respect is knowledge”*

5.2. Tolerance matters, especially when the suffering present is self-inflicted or social in its reach

5.2.1. While sin is not to blame for the suffering that comes to people, it doesn't mean sin doesn't have consequences

5.2.1.1. Pilate's violence and tyranny has brutal effects for the Jewish people

5.2.1.2. It is entirely possible the Tower of Siloam collapsed because of contractors who cut corners or greedy builders who used low quality materials

5.2.1.2.1. Sin has consequences

5.3. Jesus is calling out the intolerance of the religious leaders of his day

5.3.1. He calls them *‘killers of prophets’*

5.3.2. Jesus knows the people of Israel have the capacity to repent, just as we all do

5.3.2.1. Because Jesus knows this, he relies on God's patience

5.3.2.2. Because Jesus has faith in God's patience, tolerance becomes an act of compassion here

5.4. Jesus expresses the compassion of tolerance when he says

5.4.1. *“How often have I desired to gather as a hen gathers her brood under her wings...”*

5.4.1.1. *“And you were not willing”*

5.5. Jesus' tolerance is not at the expense of another's dignity and humanity, which means we stand against racism, sexism, hatred, and violence wherever we see it

5.5.1. How do we express our Christ-like tolerance in the face of intolerance?

5.5.1.1. We ally ourselves with those who are not tolerated

6. Jesus finishes his discussion with people of Jerusalem by saying

6.1. *“Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord”*

6.1.1. Who is that?

6.1.1.1. Here, it is Jesus

6.1.1.2. Now, it is us

6.1.1.2.1. Matthew 28

6.1.1.2.1.1. *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember that I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

6.1.1.2.2. Galatians 2

6.1.1.2.2.1. *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*

6.2. Compassion in the face of suffering

6.2.1. We long for the eternal and seek the clarity of a spiritual worldview, even as we mourn the fragility and suffering of this world

- 6.2.1.1. Which requires repentance of worldviews which seek merely to blame others for tragedy and suffering
- 6.2.2. We seek the patience that trusts in the potential and the dignity of others, regardless of where they are on their path
 - 6.2.2.1. Which requires allowing the Gardener to work with them and with us
- 6.2.3. We seek to be tolerant of others even if they disagree with us and are unwilling to change
 - 6.2.3.1. Which requires adopting Christ's willingness to align himself with those who have been excluded through intolerance
- 6.2.4. WE have the compassion of Christ available to us
 - 6.2.4.1. Let us be the ones who are the compassionate followers of Christ who bring clarity through repentance, patience through care and promise of New Life, and tolerance through respect and love to the world in the name of the Lord.**
 - 6.2.4.1.1. AMEN**