

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent (C)  
March 6, 2010

Warning: Do not take more than 8 Tylenols in 24 hours.

Warning: Curve ahead, slow down.

Warning: Wait 30 minutes after you have eaten a big meal before you go swimming.

Warning: Too much T.V. or Video Games will rot the brain.

Warning, warning, warning...our world is filled with warnings.

How many of these do we adhere to and how many do we ignore... thinking we know what's best for ourselves?

Luke's Gospel is filled with warnings today.

Warning: Pilate mingled the Galileans blood with their sacrifices, thus making the sacrifice unclean...and if you don't repent, you too will perish just as they did.

Warning: 18 people were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them, thus killing them...and you too will perish as they did if you don't repent.

Warning: fig trees who don't produce fruit are to be cut down...and if you don't produce fruit, you too will be cut down and thrown away to be burned.

Warning after warning after warning.

And they don't stop with Jesus in the Scriptures...they have continued to our day, here and now.

We face multiple warnings every day...some we recognize and others we completely miss...some we see the deeper message and others have no message...some we learn from and others we continue to get wrong, over and over again.

Take our recent natural disasters in Chile and Haiti for instance.

These aren't necessarily warnings from God, but I do think we can learn from them nonetheless.

And the lesson to be learned is that the Christian God, the Scriptural God DOES NOT punish us.

Granted, we do have to experience a particular, individual judgment at the time of our earthly death.

But even with that, God offers us freely forgiveness and mercy and lovingly purifies us so that we may more fully enjoy heaven.

And so, God does not punish us.

God is not a little kid on the playground, throwing a tantrum every time He doesn't get His way or getting into a fight with someone who takes His toy.

God is not childish in this way.

Nor are the people of Chile and Haiti Godless people.

Rather, they are God-fearing people just like us, here in Sandusky, Ohio.

They believe in God, worship God, pray to God, and love God as all of us are called to as disciples of Christ.

And we are called to love God at all times, especially when we have sinned / missed the mark / rejected God.

But, this can be hard when faced with tragedy or loss, can't it?

When put to the test, it can be very hard to love God and not think He must be punishing us for something we've done or didn't do.

When I was working at Children's Hospital in Columbus a few years ago, I was faced with many tragedies and losses...things that, on the surface, appeared to be as if God was punishing a family.

I remember one night: a couple of kids were involved in a car accident and the driver died at the scene.

Her brother, a passenger in the back, survived and made it to the hospital, later to be released the next day.

It was hard to be with that family and tell them that God was not punishing them.

Our God does not punish us...He loves us and offers us forgiveness, mercy, and grace.

He also offers us second chances...opportunities to turn back to Him and realize that we cannot go through this life without Him.

He is just too important and necessary for our survival.

Trying to live without God...one is destined for not only failure, but also death alone.

This is not the purpose of our creation and existence.

Rather, we are created to be one with God.

And to be one with God means turning away from sin...turning away from all that takes us away from God and harms us.

When we do so, we are being attentive to those warnings that are within our lives.

At the same time though, we don't have unlimited time to do so.

Our time is limited while we are here on earth.

The fig tree in the parable in Luke's Gospel was given one year to turn around and produce fruit...to do that which it was created for.

How much time do we need to turn back to God and do that which we were created for?

How much time do we need to learn from the warnings in our lives... to not grumble against God...to not desire evil things...to repent and turn back to God who freely offers us forgiveness, mercy, and love?

That is the Good News that the Scriptures speak of: God's free offering of forgiveness, mercy, and love.

And that is why we are given warnings...to help direct us back to God and be open to receiving Him in our lives as He intended from the beginning of time.

May we recognize this, recognize God's mercy, tolerance, and forgiveness, and prepare ourselves by continuing to turn away from sin and turning back to God.

And may we do this now rather than later...when it may be too late.