

This is a pre-recorded Sermon preached at Good Shepherd Baptist Church
By Rev. Stephen Guantai
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Scripture: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

Message: “Irresponsible & Responsibility”

Introduction:

If you ask a person who has done something wrong why he or she did it, he or she will have an excuse, and of course, that excuse will be directed to blame somebody or something else. For example, if you leave your car door open with a laptop in the front seat and someone steals it. Who is to blame? Of course, the thief. What about you? Do you think you were irresponsible in any way? My point here is, you are both responsible for your actions and for the outcome!

When the people of Israel committed sins, including worshipping idols, it led to the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, and the people of Israel were taken into captivity by the Babylonians. They were enslaved there for seventy years.

However, even though they knew what they had done was sinful, they did not want to associate God’s punishment with their deeds. Instead, they believed that they were being punished for the sins of their fathers, not their own. For that reason, they even blamed God for being unjust.

They maintain the belief that according to the words Moses in Exodus 34: 6b- 7, that *“The Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”*

This view led them to continue living an irresponsible lifestyle.

Holding the view that they were a chosen and blessed nation, they can live their lives the way they wanted. As a result, they became arrogant and rebellious.

They continued sinning while blaming God for punishing them for the sins of their fathers. And there was a proverb that had become common in the land, that says, “The fathers have eaten the sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge” in this they were referring to generational curses (Deuteronomy 5:8-10, Leviticus 26:39) which God has already said it will not happen again (Deuteronomy 24:16, 2 Kings 14:6, Jer 31:30).

So, this proverb irritated God to no end. So, God calls the prophet Ezekiel and asked him, “*what do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel?*” (v2).

God tells the prophet, Ezekiel, to tell the people that proverb and their belief was no longer valid. Each person is responsible for his or her sins.

And God says something very important to note in verse 4:” *For everyone belongs to me, the parent, as well as the child- both alike, belong to me. The one who sins is the one who will die.*”

Brothers and sisters in Christ, even though people may suffer as a result of what has been done by others, the Word of God is very clear; At the end, God is not going to punish us for someone else’s sins; however, we cannot use their mistakes as an excuse for our sins. Each person will be held responsible for what they have done or failed to do.

This is where the rubber meets the road: even though sin is committed almost everywhere and even so openly, the word “sin” itself is taboo in our society. For it brings about the notion of God’s judgment. Which people don’t like to hear. But this is not new. If you read Ezekiel chapter two, God commissioned Prophet Ezekiel to go to a rebellious nation of Israel saying, “*Son of man, I am sending you to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against me to this very day. The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. And whether they listen or fail to listen-for they are a rebellious people - they will know that a prophet has been among them*” (Ezekiel 2:3-5).

Church, from generation to generation God is in the business of calling and sending prophets to remind all people what God requires of us; to turn away from their evil ways and do what is right. And whether we like it or not, we cannot say we never knew what we’re doing is not right in the eyes of God.

The word of God continues to remind us that God called Ezekiel as a watchman to the house of Israel, first to warn, reprove, and call them to repent. Secondly, Ezekiel reminded the people who were continuing to do evil that God will hold them responsible as individuals for their actions. However, the good news is, he gave them hope of restoration- saying that if they repent and turn to God; God will give each individual a new heart and a spirit.

This is to say, as the church fulfills its purpose of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, it is important to be a prophetic church that is willing to point out the evil in the society. The Church must be the voice of God in the society! the church must stand and call out those who are causing pain and suffering to God’s children. And more importantly, this must be done in a loving and caring manner.

I must also warn you when you stand for this kind of message, do not expect an amen from everyone, especially those who love a God who doesn’t care what they do with their lives. And want to use God for their own gain, even when hurt others.

And this is where some will want to argue with you .But we should not worry about it—for God knows how to argue for Godself.

Listen how God responded to the people of Israel self-justification, the Lord said, “Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Hear, you Israelites: Is my way unjust? Is it not your ways that are unjust? If a righteous person turns from their righteousness and commits sin, they will die for it; because of the sin, they have committed they will die. But if a wicked person turns away from the wickedness they have committed and does what is just and right, they will save their life”.

What a loving God we worship!. The God who regardless of what we have done is always ready to forgive us and we will give us a new spirit and a new heart.

What this God requires us is to do what is right not only for us as individuals but for all of God’s people and all of God’s creation, I believe this includes loving, protecting and caring all of God’s people regardless of peoples’ race, color, gender sexual orientation, creed, or religion. Like right now, we must protect each other from Covid-19 by all means. We must do it not only by Listening to the medical experts but also by wearing masks and keeping our distance.

We must also protect all of God’s creation by prayerfully going out to vote. knowing that your vote matters and it will determine the future of not only this nation but there rest of the world. Again, remember God will hold us all responsible for what we have done or failed to do.

As Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 5:10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil...we will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.” what a joy to know that God does not take pleasure in the death of anyone! So again and again God calls us to repent and live! For God’s desire is that we may all have a new heart and a new spirit.

My prayer for each one of us is that we may all be able to stand before the Lord and receive the reward of eternal life. That we may always seek a new heart and spirit in the Lord. That we may love our neighbors and friends and our enemies as we love ourselves. May God bless you and keep you safe as we await for the Lord’s second coming! **Amen.**