

Being Saved: Eating Well

by Stewart Ruch

Repentance is a universal remedy for our diseased lives, a simple word that means reverse course and a power that transforms us and makes us productive Christians.

Duration: 22:53

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 13:1-9

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of repentance as a remedy for sin. He starts by sharing the story of the fig tree that doesn't bear fruit, emphasizing the importance of repentance and transformation. The preacher then shares his own testimony of how he used to live a life focused on image and avoiding certain actions. However, through repentance and surrendering to God, he experienced a profound change and found true nourishment. The sermon concludes by highlighting that repentance is not just a remedy, but it is also real food that brings freedom and healing from sin.

Transcript

This is Church of the Resurrection in Wheaton, Illinois. This week's sermon is by Bishop Stuart Ruck and is part four of our Lent 2016 series. Okay, so I have in this hand a bottle of Walgreens Ibuprofen, and I have in this hand Raw Organic Green Superfood.

Now there's some of you here at Res that when you don't feel quite right, you're getting sick, you're ill, you're needing greater strength, something's just not quite right, then you reach for the Walgreens Ibuprofen. There's others of you here at Res that, with a bit of smugness and righteousness, say, oh, I'm going to reach for the Raw Organic Green Superfood. And then there are those of you, like Catherine and me, that have a perfect balance in your life, and you have both in your kitchen cabinet.

So you reach for the Ibuprofen and then you take the Green Superfood, and you feel awesome afterwards. So if I were to say, okay, all right, like, Superfood people over on this side, Ibuprofen people on this side, those of you who are perfectly balanced, gather around the font and the Paschal Candle. We have people in different areas.

You would be different. Some of you have different perspectives and thoughts about what you do when you're sick or how to stay healthy. But the Superfood group and the Ibuprofen group actually have one thing very much in common.

You are looking for a remedy. You want to feel better. As a matter of fact, you want to feel better now.

And in our teaching this morning that Jesus gives, He gives us a remedy. He gives us one clear and simple remedy because He understands that humanity's condition is that we are sin sick. The way we understand our fallen nature, our sinful nature, is that we are diseased, we are ill, we are deeply and truly ill, and we need a remedy.

And indeed, so much of human longing and so much of what we're looking for and so much of what we do in a motivated body is actually trying to find a remedy for our life illness, for something that's just not quite right. Because we know that, don't we? Whether you're practiced in Christianity or you're new to it, we know that something's not quite right. And Jesus, this morning in our teaching, wants to provide us with a very profound, beautiful, and simple remedy.

That remedy is repentance. That's the way we get better. That's the way we get free from the illness and the sickness of sin.

In the first five verses, we see that repentance is a remedy. In verses 6 to 9 in our teaching from Luke chapter 13, we see that repentance is more than a remedy. It's actually real food.

So let's study together these words of Jesus Christ. They're found in your bulletin there, Luke chapter 13. Repentance is a remedy.

We've got to do some work, though, to understand how repentance is a remedy because it isn't immediately obvious from the first five verses in this teaching. There was some president at that very time who told about the Galileans whose blood-palate had mingled with their sacrifices. If you're already going, I don't know what they're talking about.

Everyone else is saying the same thing. It's okay, we're going to get there. It's not clear.

So basically, they're bringing this up, and what they're really doing is asking Jesus, were those Galileans, verse 2, worse sinners than the other Galileans because they suffered in this way? Okay, so what's happened? Historians have basically pieced together that likely what happened is that they're Galileans. A Galilean is somebody from an area called Galilee. Actually, Jesus, that's where he grew up as well.

They are not close to the temple in Jerusalem. They have to travel to the temple in Jerusalem, and they would travel there probably three times a year, and they would make what's called a sacrifice. That was the Hebrew way, the Jewish way, of getting their heart connected to God, of connecting with the Lord, and it was a way of being freed from their sin.

So they would go and make a sacrifice at the temple in a holy and beautiful time, a sacred time, a set-apart time, in the place where God's presence dwells in a special way, a protected way, a glorious way. And in this case, it would appear that there were Galileans who went to make this sacrifice, and Pilate, who is not Hebrew, he's a Roman who's a governor over this Hebrew area. The Romans are ruling over the Jewish people at this time, sent soldiers.

Maybe they heard that the Galileans were insurrectionists, they were revolutionaries. We don't know why, but somehow or another, the Galileans who were making a sacrifice were murdered at the sacrifice, and their blood, the murder of their blood, is mingled with the sacrifice. It's like the worst thing you could imagine.

It's like a current event that grips a nation, it grips a community, and you can't stop thinking about the current event. How could this happen, they're thinking. So they're saying to Jesus, something that's heinous, where they should be protected.

It must be that they did something really horrible to have such a catastrophe fall upon them. What's happening there? Well, first we see Jesus, and know what Jesus does. This is actually really beautiful, but it might be easy to miss.

He knows this isn't the only current event on their minds, the Galilean massacre. He knows there's another current event on their mind. Because God is so merciful to us, because He knows our hearts, He says, basically He's saying, there's another thing you're also worried about, isn't there? There was a tower of Siloam, likely within the walls, Jerusalem is a walled city, likely within the walls of Jerusalem, there was a tower called Siloam, and it fell on people and killed 18 of them.

You're all so stirred up about that, aren't you? I can just see how stirred up you are. I can see that you don't understand what's happening, and catastrophe terrifies you. So obviously bring out another one.

And in the same way, you thought, those people who that tower fell upon, they did something horrible to deserve that. So what's happening first is that we see that humanity devises homemade remedies for sin. God's got a remedy.

It's a Jesus remedy. But this one's homemade. This is one that we've concocted in the old laboratory of our lives, or our kind of life kitchens.

And this is the way it works. It says the way you avoid horrible things happening in your life is you never do a really bad thing. Because those who do really bad things, disaster befalls them.

This is not biblical. Now, the Bible does teach that we will spiritually reap what we sow, but it's not just that disaster falls upon those who've done horrible things. It actually says the rain falls and the just and the unjust.

That's what the Bible teaches. So they're saying to Jesus, is this true? Is this why something horrible happened to these people? This is our homemade remedy. And the way you live your life is you just never do that horrible thing.

Now, this homemade remedy is dangerous, like homemade remedies can be. This homemade remedy is very confusing. It isn't clear.

For example, what's the really bad thing? What's the really, really bad thing? What's the bright red line that if you cross that bright red line, then you're in trouble and disaster will fall on you, but if you stay on the other side of the bright red line, you're okay? Which is what we do all the time, isn't it? We say, okay, and we determine this for ourselves. There are some really bad things. Okay, so having adultery with someone would be a really bad thing.

That's a really bad thing. Bright red line. So, okay, but if I... I mean, there's somebody I'm really attracted to.

They're not my spouse. They're not my office place. And I just like to think about them.

It just makes me feel better. But I'm nowhere near crossing that bright red line. Nowhere near.

Well, actually, there's familiarity now developing between us, so, you know, we put our arm around each other every once in a while. It's casual. It's like a friendship thing.

And I'm nowhere near that bright red line. Actually, I held her hand, and I'm texting her an awful lot, but I mean, I would never cross this. You see where that's going, right? What's the bright red line? It's like an addict.

They say, okay, so I'm addicted to pot, but I'll never get addicted to something synthetic. That's the bright red line. Synthetic drugs.

Well, okay, cocaine, but I would never get into opiates. That's dangerous. Heroin, no way, right? No, the bright red line keeps moving.

The fact of the matter is, we're not clear on the bright red line. We don't know what it is, and then when does disaster befall us? It's like this capricious, horrible worldview that we've concocted for ourselves to somehow give us some momentary security, but long-term creates a life of anxiety and fear, and Jesus says, that is not what I've given you. They're waiting for Him to give an answer, theological, philosophical about disaster and people doing really bad things, but Jesus turns it personal.

He will answer the question He wants to answer, which is, how do you get free from a sin-sick soul? Repent. And the word implied in there is, you repent. You repent.

And if you do so, you will not likewise perish spiritually. Jesus is saying, this is the remedy. The Bible does not describe sin primarily as a behavior that you do.

I need to be clear, the Bible does say there are sinful behaviors that we are not to engage in, but that is not the heart of sin from the Bible's teaching. In the book of Hosea, in the Old Testament Scriptures, Hosea talks about sin as a disease that God says, turn away from that disease. Indeed, Jesus is described as a great physician because He's come to heal us of a disease which is sin.

When He says repent, it's a very simple word. It means reverse course. Sometimes we hear the word repent, and we think, oh, there's got to be more to it.

If only I knew the original language, then I'd understand what He meant by repent. You can understand what He meant by repent. Reverse course.

He actually doesn't give you any more than that. He doesn't say, so now let me explain exactly what I mean and all the nuances of repent. He's just saying, reverse course.

Reverse course of the way of destruction. Reverse course of the way of living your own life. It's like a disease.

There's so much more than a sinful behavior. There's perfectionism. That's a sinful attitude.

That's a disease that says, I can manage my own life. I can achieve my own perfection standards, and I will not cross the bright red line. There's a disease of unbelief.

Not just an attitude, but it's actually a disease of unbelief that says, I just do not believe in God or the truth of God. That's actually a disease. There's a disease of self-absorption whereby one manages and organizes one's life around one's constant needs.

That's a disease out of which sinful behaviors emanate. And Jesus is saying, there's a cure for your disease. You can reverse course.

Every human being can reverse course. You can't get too far down the road that there's a temptation that's taking you over like Paul says in 1 Corinthians today, where you cannot reverse course. This side of your death, you can always reverse course.

You can reverse course and receive the remedy of repentance for something seemingly small as a sin or for something epic. So last week I had a testimony from a woman that was here. One thing that happens when we come into the presence of God in worship, and what you've done today, and I just commend you for being here today, is you put yourself in God's presence.

We sing songs about Jesus. We focus on the cross and the altar, the presence of God with us. And things come up when that happens.

So with this woman, something came up and she realized she'd applied for a job, great job, intrinsically good job, not a bad job, good job. But something in her heart wasn't right as she was applying for it. There was something prideful, something that just wasn't right.

See, I feel, I've got a spiritual flu about this thing. And she realized, I can't go forward with this job. And the employer was actually here.

And so before she left the service, she said, I've just got to tell you, I'm out of the job. Now there was a competitive job, there were other people competing and the employer went, oh, I'm sorry to hear that, as in, you might have gotten this job. But she said, my heart's not right.

I've got to repent of something prideful in my heart about this job. And she backed off. In some ways that's smaller, right? I mean, it wasn't like she was going to go out and murder somebody.

But her heart wasn't right. So she acted. She repented.

Nineteenth century Christian thinker John Henry Newman says, repentance, holiness is easiest now. Repentance is easiest now. And she acted.

It's a small thing. But I'm one of those of you who feel like your sin's more epic. You're living in Wheaton because you had to move away from where you lived because you committed an epic sin.

And you've been incarcerated because you committed a real crime that was a sin. You're no longer living with your family. You're no longer at the same job because you did something that was sinful and egregious.

It may be epic from your perspective. It's the same remedy. There's a man named Doik, it's an Asian name, Cambodian name, who committed what all of us would agree is an epic sin.

From 1975 to 1979 in Cambodia, the nation of Cambodia underwent a horrific blinding genocide for four years. Two million Cambodians in a tiny country were murdered by their own people. It wasn't even tribal.

It was their own people who systematically over the course of four years with great organization and great intentionality exterminated two million of their own people. One of the concentration camps where they did this was an old high school called Tol Sleng. And at Tol Sleng, there was a man named Doik who had one

of the key leadership roles and he would decide with children, with women, with men, who would be exterminated and who wouldn't be.

And if they were to be exterminated, in what heinous way they'd be exterminated. He made those decisions. Finally in 1979, the Vietnamese rolled into Cambodia.

They sent the Khmer Rouge, that was the name of this group who was orchestrating this terror over Cambodia. They sent them scattered and Doik made his way to the border of Cambodia, Vietnam, and he settled down in a village there where Christians who had survived, almost all the Christians were wiped out, had a little church. They didn't know Doik's background.

They just knew him as a peasant. They reached out to him and he actually met Jesus. And he read scriptures like this.

Repent or you will perish. And Doik had the miraculous courage to believe it was true. And he repented of his sin.

He eventually went to the authorities of Cambodia and said, I am guilty of these crimes against my fellow countrymen and countrywomen. They walked him in a tall sling. And it was reported by witnesses there that he threw himself on the ground and he just cried out, could anybody ever be able to forgive me? But he knew the answer.

Yes. Yes, Jesus would forgive you if you repent. Now when I hear stuff like this, honestly I go, eh, really? Makes a great story.

Pray for a preacher. Is it real? Well, we have a leader in Cambodia that we sent from here, Father Gregory Whitaker and his wife, Dr. Heidi Whitaker. So I texted Gregory and said, what's the real story on Doik? He said, oh, Stuart, it's completely true.

He was convicted for crimes against humanity. He is serving a life prison sentence. One of our Anglican Cambodian pastors ministered to him every single week in scripture and prayer.

This man is totally and absolutely converted. He repented of his sin and he has been transformed by the power of Jesus Christ. He's a gentle man.

He's a deeply humble and contrite man. He's a man who is full of God. You can never go so far that you can't repent before the day of your death.

Not too small. Not too epic. Repentance is the remedy for our diseased lives.

That's amazing. But it's also more than that. Jesus tells a follow-up story.

And it may look like it's not connected, but it's deeply connected. It's called the story of the fig tree that doesn't bear fruit. And there's a fig tree and it goes for three years and it doesn't bear any fruit.

And the owner of the vineyard is going to cut the fig tree down. And the vinedresser, the gardener, says, give me one more year. I'm going to feed it with manure.

I'm going to give it waste that has nutrients actually in it and it will bear fruit. It's going to bear fruit. Why does Jesus follow up this story with repentance? Because repentance is not only a remedy.

Repentance is real food. What He's saying is that if your life isn't bearing fruit, if you don't have a kind of spiritual fruit in your own heart, like a peace and a love and a joy and also the ability to serve others and love others, it could be that repentance and the need for repentance is what's holding you back. You haven't known to repent.

You haven't known how to repent. You didn't know you were supposed to repent of a disease or whatever it might be. The repentance is like real food.

It feeds the fig tree and it's what bears fruit. So that yes, the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ is why He can say repent. He said repent on His own authority because He would take the sin of every human being on Him.

The Old Testament literally says, the prophet Isaiah literally says that by His wounds, it's prophetically referring to the cross that hadn't happened yet, we will be healed. But His resurrection promises that not only are we healed, but we are revived by repentance. Not only are we cleansed, but we are created anew.

That we have a power we didn't have before. That we can bear fruit and actually the waste of our lives, the sin of our lives, the manure of our lives, God will transform and use to feed our lives. That's what makes you a productive and strong Christian.

It's repentance. Humbling yourself with the stuff of your life that you just as soon throw away. Like God says, bring it to me.

Bring me your repentance. Bring me your sin. I'll transform it into real food by the power of my cross and resurrection.

This is my own testimony. Twenty-five years ago, I had a life that I was living that was all about avoiding the great big thing. Whatever that was.

I had some great big things in my head that I concocted in my homemade remedy that I should never do if I did those bad things that happened to me. But my life was all about my image. It was all about developing an image, fostering an image and I worked really hard at it and I'm a hard worker.

I was really good at shifting. I could be amazing with this group. I could be impressive with this group.

I could be magnetic with this group. And I spent all of my energy developing that. It was pride.

It was the disease of sin. It was living by an image. And God broke through to me and I heard the words He said to these people as well, repent.

And I reversed course. I changed my life in Jesus. I repented of my sin.

And not only then was I cleansed and felt lighter, I just had a new power. And all of a sudden, literally within days, I didn't care about my image like I used to. I went from fostering an image with every article of clothing and everything that I said and a week later, I was on the Chicago L preaching.

That was not the image I was seeking to foster a week before that. People thought I was absolutely crazy. I mean, the minute that the car stopped, they all got off the train except for one woman and she gave me a dollar.

It was a new power. It was coursing through me. I was all of a sudden eating real food.

Now that's true in an epic way for me. That was my epic deal. It was true for me last week when I was studying God's Word and I preached a sermon last week about being stripped down and vulnerable and leaving the things that we want to take for our security and man, God spoke to me about a security thing that I've got.

It was big. It was deep. It was entrenched in my soul.

And I got clear, man, I'm holding on to this thing as a security and it had been working on me and I finally repented of this security that wasn't Jesus. And the same thing happened again and not in the same scale but I got really light. I felt cleansed and I had a new energy.

I had a new strength. Repent now. It's the only remedy.

It's a real food. Repent. And believe the Gospel.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen.

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