

*At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? 3No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. 4Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? 5No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did."*

*6Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. 7So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' 8He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. 9If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"*

Sometimes I wonder about our fish. They are run of the mill, tropical fish with brains no bigger than a pin head: a few swords, a few platies. Now I do not believe that they can think deep thoughts, but if they could, how would life seem to them? Would they search for connections between their deeds and their fate?

I don't know but I suspect they can't see through that glass. They chase the reflection of themselves up and down and over and back day after day. Are they driving out an intruder, is their heart full of pride after another day of keeping that reflection at bay? Maybe my fish believes with all its being that if it ever stops that chasing all would be lost. How foolish!

Or maybe as my daughter opens the lid to scatter the food morning and night my fish think that they can do something to control this blessing: the right prayer, avoiding a forbidden part of the tank.

If Katie forgets for a day to feed them, will my fish search their hearts for some sin, some failing that has brought this fate upon them?

If the power goes out, the temperature of the water drops and one of my fish's companions dies, will my fish search himself endlessly for some failing that has led to this tragedy?

I wonder.

I wonder if as God looks down upon us, if we seem as foolish as this, looking for meaning where there is none, trying to control what is beyond our control, chasing a great enemy which is only our reflection in the glass.

I wonder.

One day some people told Jesus about what had just happened. In those days before TV word of mouth was the evening news.

Jesus, did you hear what happened in Jerusalem last week. Some men from Galilee were at the temple, offering a sacrifice. Pilate heard they were the ones plotting a revolt and he sent his soldiers who slaughtered them right in the temple. Their blood was all mixed with the blood of the lambs. I guess that's what happens to sinners.

But Jesus responded, *“Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? 3No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. 4Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? 5No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”*

Sinners suffer - good people do not. That's the wisdom of the fish. A tower falls and people say, "Must have been a reason" - their sin.

But Jesus whose view of life reaches from outside of the tank has a different word. “You all deserve towers falling, but God is gracious, God does not give you what you deserve. He's like a gardener who has a fig tree that does not bear fruit. He waits a normal amount of time, still no fruit. And when the tree ought to be cut down and space given to a new tree, still he gives the tree another year.

Do not be fooled into thinking good fortune is a sign of God's favor any more than suffering a sign of his displeasure. Towers fall, people are slaughtered, but like fish in a tank you can never see why. Trust in God. Whether towers fall, or rulers slaughter trust in God. Even when the waters turn cold and the only food to be found is lodged between the rocks on the bottom, trust in God. He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”

Now I know Jesus did not use fish and aquariums to tell his truth. He used his life. For it was not long before he was the latest news:

“Did you hear what happened to Jesus? Crucified - serves him right - shows how much God cared about him. If God wanted good people to eat with the sinners, and the rich to share with the poor, and for us to turn the other cheek and to pray for our enemies, then God would have saved Jesus. But not an angel came to Golgotha when they hung him out in the hot sun.

God blesses those he loves, blesses them with riches and long life and safety. He certainly didn't care much for Jesus, letting him die like that.”

That's what word of mouth said for a while.

But soon there was another word. “Jesus lives! God has said ‘Yes’ to him. The almighty has said ‘yes’ to Jesus every word and deed. His poverty, his being abandoned by followers and friends, his dying all were part of God's will for the one he called his beloved Son.”

When God raised Jesus from the dead, God takes us all outside the aquarium for an instant. In raising Jesus from the dead God enables us to see beyond our own reflection in the glass to glimpse the one on whom all things depend.

The world is blessed with food for everyone - human greed only keeps us from seeing that.

Our creator, our supplier, our guardian is gracious. God’s intention for all God’s creatures is life.

The life we know now, confined to earth is only a beginning of the life God has prepared for those who follow Jesus in faith. Though towers fall, and tyrants rage, and the holy ones are hung on the crosses of this world, God will have God’s way, even beyond death.

Repent. Turn to the God Jesus has revealed. Count on God, trust in God, live for Christ forever. Amen.