

*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.'"*

It always happens to the other guy.

Other people's friends died in Viet Nam. My friends did not.

I drove across Nebraska years ago. Ahead was a yellow car. Far off a deer came bounding, I watched as car and deer came together, the crash, the falling deer, the spinning car, its front smashed in. It happened to the other guy.

I turn on the evening news, there are many names; mine is not one of them. It always happens to the other guy.

Did you hear, Jesus? Some people from our own area, Galilee, were in Jerusalem offering a sacrifice at the temple. Pilate's soldiers came in and slaughtered them. Their own blood pooled with the blood of the lamb they offered.

And Jesus said, "I'm sure glad it was them and not us."

No, I got that wrong. That is what I would say. What Jesus said was this: *"Do you think that because they suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all the other Galileans? No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish as they did."*

I would like an insurance contract with God. God give me a guarantee that I am not going to be the other guy, the one it happens to.

But I heard the story of Alvin Rogness, president of Luther Theological Seminary for many years. Back in my North Dakota days so many of my friends told of his preaching, his compassion. No one spoke his name without a profound respect and love. One of his sons had been studying in England for a year. He returned to Minneapolis, and on his way home from the airport this son was involved in an auto accident and killed. The long awaited reunion

would have to wait for eternity. Not even for Alvin Rogness was there any insurance against being the other guy.

What can we do? Jesus says, "Repent."

Don't push your luck with God. If a man like Alvin Rogness could become the other guy, we had all better get down on our knees day and night repenting.

Paul says the same. The children of Israel were right there in God's presence with the cloud that led them. They went through the Red Sea and it was like a great baptism. They had manna falling from heaven for their food. Paul even says that the rock from which the water in the wilderness came was Christ. Yet God was not pleased with them. Everyone but Joshua and Caleb became the other guy, even Moses and Aaron and Miriam - they all died in the wilderness. Paul says, "So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall."

We'd like some insurance. We'd like a rock on which we could stand where no flood could ever touch us.

But there is no one in this world who does not become the other guy - not even Jesus.

Before long Pilate would be spilling Jesus' blood, not in the temple, but on Golgotha, on the cross. No amount of pleading in the garden spared him. Even though he had no sin to repent of, nothing that God held against him, Jesus became the other guy. Jesus became you.

And God was the one whose Son died on the way home. God became the other guy too.

So if you think that you are standing, watch out that you do not fall.

There is only one fall that you need fear, falling away from Jesus Christ. In every other fall Paul promises we will still be "more than conquerors through him who loves us." As long as you cling to Christ there will come no testing too great. And then Paul says the words that are our hope.

"God is faithful."

Even when you become the other guy God is faithful and you will not be lost. Even if it is your blood that Pilate is spilling, God has given you Christ for all eternity. You will never be just the other guy again; you are the chosen child of God. Christ became the other guy for you. You will be victorious in the end.

For now repent. Do not become arrogant - deceived when you are spared misfortune. But most of all know that God is faithful in Christ. Amen.