

Introduction (Luke 13:1-9)

In April 2000, my daughter Kathleen was diagnosed with AML Leukemia. One of the things I did besides pastoring a congregation and working at the prison, was to lead a quarterly city-wide prayer meeting. I was pretty well connected with the pastors in our area. When Kathleen was diagnosed, one of the churches organized a prayer meeting on her behalf. There were about 500 people at that prayer meeting, representing about five or six different churches. It was a real nice turnout. One of my daughters stayed at the hospital that night so that I could attend the prayer meeting. During the meeting, the prayer leader asked me to come forward so that they could pray for Kathleen. As I was standing up at front with him, he man prayed that the Lord would expose the sin in my life that was preventing my daughter from being healed. It got very quiet in that large auditorium.

Afterwards, in private, I told him that if the Lord had given him a prophetic word about a sin in my life, the proper thing would be to discuss it in private. The proper attitude, particularly for something that you thought you heard, would be to come to a person in a spirit of humility and inquisition. Even if the man had been correct, he was wrong in his application. The main point of me sharing this with you this morning is not about how to handle prophetic words, but to illustrate that there are many in the church that attribute sicknesses, natural disasters, and other events to the judgment of God. It is fairly common in the church. Some teach if you are not healed then there is a stronghold in your life. If you are not healed, there is sin in your life. If you are not healed, you are lacking in your faith. I learned a lot in that season of our life about how to deal with people who are working through difficult things in their lives. **When people are suffering, God wants us to show love and compassion to them.**

There are many examples of this in the Scriptures. For example in John 9, Jesus and His disciples passed by a blind man. His disciples asked Jesus, “who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?” That was the prevailing attitude at the time. There was an association between physical and material prosperity and righteous living.

(John 9:1-3) “As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. {2} And His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?” {3} Jesus answered, “It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

We saw this same attitude in the book of Job. When calamity hit Job, his friends told him of the sin in his life. Job tells them that they smear him with lies and are worthless physicians. Listen to what Job says.

(Job 13:4-23) “But you smear with lies; You are all worthless physicians. {5} O that you would be completely silent, And that it would become your wisdom!...{21} Remove Your hand from me, And let not the dread of You terrify me....{23} How many are my iniquities and sins? Make known to me my rebellion and my sin...”

I identify with Job. I had a Job season in my life. And, some of my friends were descendants of Job’s friends. They came to me with similar attitudes and accusations. One of the things that I love about the Vineyard is the commitment to love and show compassion on those who are hurting.

That is where our passage starts today. There were some people who reported to Jesus that some Galileans were killed while bringing and offering their sacrifices to the Lord. Luke said that Pilate mixed their blood with their sacrifices. By Jesus' response, there must have been some questions about what sins they had committed for a calamity like this would happen to them. After answering them with a question, He tells them of another calamity. He reminds them of the tower of Siloam that fell and killed eighteen people. There are natural disasters and calamities that occur that have nothing to do with our sins. It has nothing to do with God's judgment on us. People are quick to attribute earthquakes, hurricanes, fires, volcanic eruptions, and all kinds of things to God's judgment on us. We have to be very careful about doing this. The second part of the passage is a parable about a fig tree in a vineyard. It was not bearing fruit and the owner of the vineyard wanted to cut it down. The vineyard-keeper pleaded for another year, for another chance for the tree to bear fruit before cutting it down.

I have titled the message a call to repent. We find that all of us are going to perish. All of us need to repent. Furthermore, we are on borrowed time. We have a limited time to repent. We must repent while there is still time to repent. When the owner of the vineyard comes back, it will be too late to repent. He is patiently waiting, not desiring anyone to perish.

Why We All Need To Repent

1. We are all going to perish
2. We are all on borrowed time

Let's read our passage.

(Luke 13:1-5) "Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. {2} And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? {3} "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. {4} "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? {5} "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

(Luke 13:6-9) "And He began telling this parable: "A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any. {7} "And he said to the vineyard-keeper, 'Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?' {8} "And he answered and said to him, 'Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; {9} and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.'"

1. We are all going to perish

The passage begins with a report about some Galileans who had been killed while offering sacrifices to the Lord. The Jewish temple was in Jerusalem, so these Galileans had gone to Jerusalem to present their offerings. While there, Pilate put them to death, and their blood was mixed with their sacrifices.

(Luke 13:1) "Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices."

Jesus asks them a good question. He is dealing with a wrong attitude and doctrine that they held. He asks, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate?” He is really asking them if a disaster like this happened because they were greater sinners who deserved this judgment.

(Luke 13:2) “And Jesus said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate?”

On March 8, 2014, Malaysian Air Flight 370 went missing. It was en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, and suddenly disappeared. There were 239 people on board, and nobody knows for sure what happened to them? Were they greater sinners than other Malaysians or Chinese? Were they greater sinners than you and I? Was this disaster a judgment of God?

On July 17, 2014, the world stayed glued to the news reports about Malaysian Air Flight 17. It was on its way from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur with 298 people on board. There was a Dutch Senator on board. There were six delegates going to an AIDS conference in Melbourne. ABC News reported that there were 100 scientists and researchers on board who were also going to the AIDS conference. There were 80 children on board. The airline was apparently shot down by a sophisticated Russian missile. All the evidence points to this, but it has not been confirmed, and may never be confirmed. All 298 people perished. Were these 80 children worse sinners than other children? Were they worse sinners than you and I? Did these people suddenly get judged by God?

On December 26, 2004, a tsunami hit Southeast Asia, killing 250,000 people. While Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world, were they worse sinners than anyone else in the world? Did God suddenly bring judgment down on them. Unless we repent, we will likewise perish.

Karen and I visited the ruins of Pompei while we were in Italy. Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD and killed the 11,000 inhabitants of the city. The whole city was buried in ash, and has been excavated. We can see their way of life. We saw wine shops, banks, bakeries, and bath houses. We also saw the erotic symbols that they had on top of their houses of prostitution. They were sinners. But, the towns all around them shared the same cultural way of life. Were the citizens of Pompei worse sinners than those in Naples? Was this a judgment of God because they were worse sinners?

Jesus gives an answer to them that the church needs to hear. He said, “I tell you, no.” **The answer to the question if they were worse sinners than others is no.** The answer to the question if this calamity and other disasters were a result of God’s judgment on them was an emphatic no. Jesus does not stop there. He continues, “but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” All of us are going to die. All of us are going to perish. All of us are sinners and need to repent.

(Luke 13:3) “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

Jesus did not say they were not sinners; He said they were not worse sinners that received a special judgment of God on their lives. His comments clearly infer that they were sinners, but their accusers were also sinners. Romans 3:23 says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Every one of us are in the same sinful condition. **Everyone of us are going to die in our sins unless we repent.** The Pharisees, Sadducees and everyone else present needed to repent of their sins and get right with God.

(Rom 3:23) “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

(Rom 6:23) “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Donald preached last week about being ready for the return of the Lord. Jesus is continuing this long sermon with still another admonition to repent before it is too late. In Psalm 32:6, David says, “therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.” When disaster hits, like the flood in Noah’s time, it is too late to get into the ark. When an evil ruler decides to kill people who are offering their sacrifices, it is too late. We need to be dressed in readiness. We need to have made our ways right before the Lord and before others. We need to have settled all accounts. We need to repent before we die in our sins.

(Ps 32:6) “Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.”

I would like to take a pause in our text to give a balance. In Proverbs 11:31, Solomon says, “if the righteous will be rewarded in the earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!” **There are consequences to our actions here on earth. God does bring judgment on people and places.** He is God and He does reward the righteous and the wicked in the earth. Jesus’ statement does not violate that. The Pharisees and others were pointing fingers and saying it was judgment. That is God’s place, not ours. They should have been addressing the sins in their own lives, not pointing their fingers at the sins of others. They had sins that they needed to repent of. The ones that they were pointing at were no worse sinners. The calamity that happened to them was not because they were special sinners.

(Pr 11:31) “If the righteous will be rewarded in the earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!”

We see in Numbers 16 that the sons of Korah rebelled against God’s chosen leaders. They said that the leaders had gone far enough, and all of them were holy. That is true. All of us are holy. Your leadership team is not holier than you. But the sons of Korah said, “why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?” The leadership in a church is raised up by God. It was God who chose Moses. It was God that chose Aaron and his sons. God is the one that raises up leaders. The sons of Korah did not show honor or respect to their leaders.

(Num 16:1-3) “Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took action, {2} and they rose up before Moses, together with some of the sons of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, chosen in the assembly, men of renown. {3} They assembled together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, “You have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?”

When they spoke against their leaders, they spurned the Lord. Consequently, the ground that was under them split open, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households. God brought judgment down on the sons of Korah. God can and does bring judgment down on

people at times. That is His right to do so. In this case, God made it very clear that He did this, and there was a specific sin associated with the judgment.

(Num 16:30-33) “But if the LORD brings about an entirely new thing and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that is theirs, and they descend alive into Sheol, then you will understand that these men have spurned the LORD.” {31} As he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open; {32} and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with their possessions. {33} So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.”

We have several incidents in the New Testament. For example, in Acts 12:23 Luke tells us that Herod was struck down because he did not give God the glory. He was eaten by worms and died. We know it was a judgment of God because the Scriptures tell us.

(Acts 12:23) “And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.”

We know that Ananias and Sapphira were struck down for lying to the Holy Spirit. God can bring judgment down on people anytime he wants. Our job is not to be pointing fingers. We have to learn from these examples. We have to learn not to lie to the Holy Spirit. We have to learn not to take glory on ourselves, but to give God all the glory. We have to learn to highly esteem those God places in authority over us.

Our job here on earth is not to speak judgment, but to help bring people to Christ. That was Jesus’ mission. Paul tells us in Philippians 2:5 that we are to “have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.” What was Christ’s attitude? What was His mission? Christ humbled Himself. We are to be humble, not arrogant and judgmental. Jesus came to save the world, not to judge the world. That is what John 3:17 tells us.

(Phil 2:5) “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,”

(John 3:17) “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”

Jesus continues with another example. This time he mentions eighteen people who were killed when the tower in Siloam fell. He asks, “do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you no, and unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” Again, the emphasis is not worrying about the sins of others. **Jesus wants us to look in the mirror and repent of the sins in our lives.** Jesus wants us to settle accounts with God before we perish.

(Luke 13:4-5) “Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? {5} "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

Have you repented of your sins? Have you asked God to forgive you for the sins in your life? God

sent His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins. He is the sacrificial Lamb that takes away the sins of the world. The Scriptures teach us that He died not just for our sins, but the sins of the whole world. There is provision for my sins, your sins, and all sins. If not, settle things with God this morning.

(1 John 2:2) “and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.”

2. We are all on borrowed time

This sermon that Jesus has been preaching began in Luke 12:1, and it ends with this final paragraph. He taught them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which was hypocrisy. They were teaching one thing and doing something different. He taught them to fear God, not men. He taught them to confess Christ before others, not to fear men. He taught them not to covet things on earth, but to lay up treasures in heaven. He taught them that He was going to come back again, and they need to be found doing His work. They were to be dressed in readiness. He taught them that following Him may cause them to be separated from their family or friends. He taught them to settle accounts with God before it is too late. He taught them not to look at the sins of others, but to repent of their sins, or they would likewise perish.

Jesus concludes His message with a parable about a fig tree that had been planted in a vineyard. The owner of the vineyard came looking for some fresh figs on his fig tree. Fig trees are very productive. Some fig trees put out as many as four crops of figs per year. My father has three fig trees and they produce a lot of figs. On his trees, some figs are small, and others are full size. Some figs are hard and green, and others are purple and soft, ready to pick and eat. The owner should have been able to find some fruit on his fig tree which he could eat. Unfortunately, there were no figs on the tree.

(Luke 13:6) “And He began telling this parable: "A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any.”

When the owner did not find any fruit, “he said to the vineyard-keeper, ‘Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?’” It was normal to carefully prepare the soil in the vineyard. All the rocks would have been removed. Mulch and manure would have been added, making it a very rich and fertile soil. The vineyard would be weeded, and watered regularly. It was a perfect growing environment for the grape vines, and anything else that was put in it. Therefore, this fig tree should have flourished in its environment. When it did not produce any fruit, the owner was obviously disappointed. He had expectations that were not met, and he was disappointed.

(Luke 13:6-7) “And He began telling this parable: "A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any. {7} "And he said to the vineyard-keeper, 'Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?’”

The vineyard keeper responded to the owner of the vineyard. He tells him to “let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I did around it and put in fertilizer; and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.” The fig tree was on borrowed time. The owner had come looking for fruit on it for three straight years. The owner would not have come looking for fruit until the fig tree could produce fruit. The fig tree has had ample time to get established and to start bearing fruit. When the tree did not

bear fruit the second year, the owner could have cut it down. The owner had already been very patient. Now, after three years of not bearing fruit, it deserved to be cut down. The fact it was given another year revealed the patience of the owner.

(Luke 13:8-9) “And he answered and said to him, 'Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; {9} and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.’”

This fruit tree is on what we call borrowed time. It deserved to be cut down and destroyed. Now, it was being given an additional measure of time, and if it did not bear fruit, then it was going to be cut down. It was on borrowed time. Some of you may have seen a news story this week about a TV news anchor for WXIA in Champaign, Illinois who made a public announcement about his brain cancer. Dave Benton announced that his brain cancer had come back, and that it was inoperable. His doctors informed him that it was too big for radiation or surgery, and that he only has four to six months to live. He is in a similar situation to the fig tree. He has a limited time to be healed or death is certain.

In our text today, **the owner of the vineyard and fig tree is God**. And just as the owner was patient with the fig tree, God is patient with us. He is a patient and compassionate God. Let's look at just a few Scriptures that talk about His patience and lovingkindness. In Exodus 34, Moses is in the presence of the Lord and is about to receive the Ten Commandments. It says, “then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth, who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished...’” **God is compassionate, gracious, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth, but that does not mean that He will not punish the guilty.** All of us have sinned, and are guilty. None of us are any better than the ones that Herod put to death while they were presenting their sacrifices. None of us are any better than the eighteen at the tower of Siloam. Unless we repent, we will be judged and punished.

(Ex 34:6-7) “Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; {7} who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”

We also see this description of God in Psalm 86:15. It reads, “You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.”

(Ps 86:15) “But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.”

The prophet Joel said, “rend your heart and not your garments. Now return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness, and relenting of evil.” What I love about that is he gives a balance and good options for us. We need to rend our hearts or repent. It is not an outward show, but a heart repentance. God is gracious and compassionate, and relenting of evil. If we will repent, we will find forgiveness. We will find how gracious and compassionate He is. We will be spared of the judgment that we deserve.

(Joel 2:13) “And rend your heart and not your garments.” Now return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil.”

God does not want any of us to perish. God does not want any of us to enter into judgment. The reason that He sent Jesus was to pay the penalty for our sins. He sent Jesus as an atonement for our sins. He sent Jesus to wash our sins away and to make us righteous. Listen to what Paul wrote Timothy. In 1 Timothy 2, after telling us to pray for all men, and for kings and all in authority, he says, “this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.” **God does not want any of us to perish.**

(1 Tim 2:3-4) “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, {4} who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Look what Paul wrote to the Romans.

(Rom 2:4-8) “Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? {5} But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, {6} who will render to each person according to his deeds: {7} to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; {8} but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.”

God is the owner of the fig tree. He is being patient for the fig tree to repent and bear fruit. **God is waiting patiently for all men to repent, be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.** We are not to think lightly of His kindness and tolerance and patience. He is giving us an opportunity to repent and settle our accounts with Him. For those who repent, there is eternal life. For those who do not repent, there is wrath and indignation.

I want to look at one final verse. In 2 Peter 3:9, Peter writes that “the Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” The owner of the vineyard is going to return. We do not know if the one year is going to be up today, tomorrow, or a thousand years from now. His time table is not our time table. He is coming back, and He is not being slow about coming back. He is being patient, giving men an opportunity to repent and bear fruit. He does not want any to perish, so He is letting us water, fertilize, and get as many people to bear fruit before He returns.

(2 Pet 3:9) “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

Conclusion

In some ways, all of us are like Dave Benton. All of us are going to perish. All of us have a cancer called sin. All of us are going to die in our sins, unless God heals us of that sin. The good news is that our cancer is operable. The good news is that we do not have to die in our sins. We simply need to place our trust in Jesus Christ, and to confess Him as Lord. We need to confess our sins to Him and

allow Him to forgive and cleanse us from our sins.

In 1974, the Lord opened up my eyes. I saw and understood that the Lord is real. I knew that I was a sinner; that was not the issue with me. I came to a place where I knew God was real, and I got on my knees and asked Jesus to come into my life. He did come in, and my life has been changed.

Have you come to the place where you know that Christ is real. Have your eyes been opened? Have you confessed Jesus as your Lord and received His forgiveness for your sins? If not, let me encourage you to confess Him as Lord this morning. Simply pray this with me this morning, “Jesus, I believe that You are Lord, and I ask You to come into my life. I ask You to forgive me of my sins. Amen.” It is as simple as that. If you prayed that this morning, I want to ask you to come forward. We want to pray for you as you begin your journey with Christ.

I want to finish the story about Dave Benton. He has confessed Jesus as His lord. He is a born-again Christian. Dave trusts that God is in control of his life and he is at peace. He is ready for the vineyard keeper to come back. If the Lord comes back, He is ready. He is bearing fruit in his life. He says he plans to continue anchoring the news as long as he possibly can.

Some of you have already received Christ into your life, but you have not been seeing much fruit. What is it that is preventing you from bearing fruit? Are there relationships in your life that need to be mended? Are there areas of your life that you have not surrendered to the Lord. John tells us that Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. If we abide in Him, we will bear much fruit. There may be areas of your life that you have not turned over to the Lord. Those branches are not bearing any fruit. You need to repent and give those areas to the Lord. I encourage you to humble yourself and come forward. Allow us to pray with you.

Let's pray.

Introduction (Luke 13:1-9, John 9:1-3, Job 13:4-23)

- When people are suffering, God wants us to show _____ and _____ to them.

1. We are all going to perish (Luke 13:1-5)

- The answer to the question if they were worse sinners than others is _____. (Luke 13:3)
- Everyone of us are going to die in our sins unless we _____. (Rom 3:23, 6:23, Ps 32:6)
- There are _____ to our actions here on earth. (Pr 11:31)
- God does bring _____ on people and places. (Num 16:1-33, Acts 12:23)
- Our job is not to speak judgment, but to help bring people to _____. (Phil 2:5, John 3:17)
- Jesus wants us to look in the mirror and _____ of the sins in our lives. (Luke 13:4-5, 1 John 2:2)

2. We are all on borrowed time (Luke 13:6-9)

- The owner of the vineyard and fig tree is _____.
- God is compassionate, gracious, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth, but that does not mean that He will not _____ the guilty. (Ex 34:6-7, Ps 86:15, Joel 2:13)
- God does not want any of us to _____. (1 Tim 2:3-4, Rom 2:4-8, 2 Pet 3:9)
- God is waiting patiently for all men to _____, be _____, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

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