

MEET YOURSELF IN LUKE'S PARABLES

Part 6: The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree on Repentance (Luke 13:1-9)

INTRO: Studying Luke's unique parables – 19 in all, 18 in 9:51-19:27 traveling to Jerusalem and cross chart... Makes quick trip to Jerusalem and Feast of Tabernacle (John 7:10-10:21). Between 10:21 and 22 back to Galilee for about 3 months – through Samaria into Galilee.

OCCASION for Parable: From 12:1-13:21 Jesus is traveling and largely instructing His disciples on a variety of topics ... 13:1-9 on importance of repentance. Read text ...

MAIN TRUTH: While still possible (before death or His return), repent and bear fruit, or else perish.

I. THE *PRIORITY* OF REPENTANCE (Lk. 13:1-5)

- A. TWO INSTANCES – Jesus relates two tragedies to illustrate the priority of repentance.
 - 1. Victims of Murder - Pilate had murdered Galileans. Some tragedies are caused by fallen people.
 - 2. Victims of Tragic Accident - Jerusalem tower killed 18 innocent bystanders. . . High rise in surfside ...Some tragedies are from living in a fallen world.
- B. JEWISH THEOLOGY taught all suffering was due to victim's sins (can be true). They believed that human tragedy was the result of divine punishment (Job 4:7; Jn. 9:1-3).
- C. JESUS' RESPONSE was radical and gave whole new perspective on life's tragedies. He taught them that calamity can come to anyone since we all live in a fallen society. Human tragedies are not always divine punishments. They remind us that calamity, death, and judgment are imminent, so be ready through true repentance. Often the greatest saints suffer most. True salvation depends on repentance and grace, not upon who is better than who (works). Being killed or not being killed is not a gauge of one's righteousness or unrighteousness. Anyone can be killed. All will die. The real issue is: "Am I prepared to die?" Only way to prepare is to "Repent or perish."

If their view was right, the logical end is this: If God does punish sinners in this way, then they'd better repent because we're all sinners. Real issue is not, "Why did they die?" Rather, "What right has a sinner to live?" But, so much easier to argue theology and speculate why people suffer and die than to face up to our own sin

and death. Repentance is a priority for all people. We are all sinners deserving God's judgment.

- D. Repentance is essential. Both stories are a call to repent.

Repentance is key in Luke's Gospel (Lk. 3:3, 8; 5:32; 13:3, 5; 15:7; 16:30; 17:3; 24:47...9xs). Theme of Bible and heart of Gospel. All (lost and saved) need to repent and live a life that evidences such repentance (Acts 17:30-31; 2 Pet. 3:9). Two options: repent or perish!

II. A *PARABLE* ON REPENTANCE (Lk. 13:6-9)

- A. Parable ILLUSTRATES and ENFORCES Jesus' point – Judgment comes to all who fail to repent. Either repent or perish.
- B. TRUE repentance SHOWS (bears fruit) – Earlier, Jesus taught (Matt. 7:15-21; 13:22; Jn. 15:16). Repentance results in a change that shows. If not, then like figless fig tree!
- C. FIG TREE – Lev. 19:23-25 says don't eat fruit from newly planted tree the first three years and the fruit from 4th year belongs to God. But if bears no fruit over time, then cut the tree down. Plainly, the fig tree had more than average chance.
- D. PRIMARY & IMMEDIATE APPLICATION to the Jewish nation (Isa. 5:1-7). Now for these brief years of His Son's ministry, God looked for fruit. Still missing and some 40 yrs. later, Roman armies destroyed.
- E. SECONDARY & PRESENT TO US. There are several lessons on repentance and fruitlessness for all to understand:
 - 1. *Life in a fallen world is fragile* -
 - 2. *God patiently calls all people to repent or perish* (vv. 3, 5).
 - 3. *True believers bear fruit*. No exceptions, just expectations.
 - 4. *Fruitlessness is uselessness*. Without fruit (evidences of salvation), we are worthless and of no value.
 - 5. *Fruitlessness ends in judgment*. God is patient and gives time for us to bear fruit. He even "digs & fertilizes" us to help us get there (v.8) – allows trials, hear sermons, etc. All efforts to bring us to show fruit. But eventually, His mercy and patience run out.

CONC: Is God digging and fertilizing in your life to help you bear fruit that shows repentance and salvation? This parable concludes "open-ended" forcing listener to draw conclusion. "Did fig tree ever bear fruit? Did extra time and care make any difference? Was tree spared or cut down? We don't know about the tree. But can answer about our own lives. There's a greater question than, "What about the tree?" It is this: "What about *me*?" Do I show fruit?