

**The Parables of Jesus #23**  
**The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree**  
**(Lk. 13:1-9)**  
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**INTRODUCTION**

**A. News reports often make us wonder about why things happen**

1. Every week, we hear of terrible murders, often to young people
2. Earlier this year, a bomb blew up the Federal building in Ok. City
3. Hurricanes and floods wipe out entire communities

**B. Question.....**

1. Are you ever tempted to think, "Those people brought it on themselves?"
2. I've heard people blame inner city violence on the fact that "Those people are just getting what they deserve."
3. We sometimes are guilty of the same thinking as Job's friends
  - a. they believed a person was rewarded in direct proportion to his righteousness
  - b. they believed a person was punished in direct proportion to his sinfulness
  - c. therefore, you could determine a person's righteousness or sinfulness by the things that happened to them
  - d. that's why Job's problem was perplexing, and it proved that such thinking was wrong

**C. The passage we will look at tonight begins in somewhat the same way**

1. Two events that are evidently somewhat current news stories of the day give rise to a more important discussion
2. Events that are unrelated to ourselves, give rise to some concerns that are of utmost importance to us

## **I. BACKGROUND TO THE PARABLE (Lk 13:1-5)**

### **A. The discussion centers around two events**

1. We do not know exactly what these events were, but it seems that they were relatively recent, newsworthy events
2. They were the kind of events that had everyone talking

### **B. First event -- news of a horrible murder (Lk 13:1)**

1. At some point some Galileans had been murdered by Pilate
2. Some scholars believe these were followers of a man named Judas of Galilee
  - a. one of Pilate's projects was to build a water system for Jerusalem, but it required such a cost that tax money was actually taken from contributions Jews made to the temple
  - b. this enraged many Jews and Judas of Galilee was a leader of the anti-taxation movement
  - c. his was a revolutionary group determined to overthrow the the Roman occupation of Israel, which made him an enemy of Rome
  - d. it is believed Pilate may have had them assassinated while worshipping in the temple and made their blood mingle with the animal sacrifices
3. Perhaps this was reported to Jesus to see if he would condemn Pilate and the Romans
4. Perhaps the report was motivated by thinking that the Galileans got what they deserved

### **C. Second event -- news of a horrible disaster**

1. Jesus brought this one up
2. There were 18 people who had all been killed in a freak accident when a tower fell on them
  - a. some believe the tower was actually part of the fortification around the city walls of Jerusalem
  - b. it may have been near the Pool of Siloam
  - c. they may have been construction workers who were making repairs or modifications to the tower

#### **D. Jesus reveals the common thinking about such events**

1. Luke 13:2  
And Jesus answered and said to them, ""Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? (NKJ)
2. Luke 13:4  
Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? (NKJ)
3. Jesus knew that this people were saying these tragedies happened because the victims were in some way sinful
  - a. responsibility was put on the victim for the event
  - b. unstated conclusion -- if they had been better people, they would not have suffered such a fate

#### **E. Jesus revealed that such thinking is erroneous**

1. He does it with two statements, both exactly the same, and applied to both events
  - a. Luke 13:3 -- in answer to the Galileans who were murdered  
I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. (NKJ)
  - b. Luke 13:5 -- in answer to those killed in the tower accident  
I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. (NKJ)
2. Why does he disagree that the events were caused by the victim's sins
  - a. such thinking leads to an extremely mistaken idea
  - b. that idea is that since these kind of things haven't happened to me, then I must not have the same problem those people did
  - c. Jesus knew there was a far greater truth that needed recognition
  - d. that truth has to do with fact that all of us are sinners
3. Jesus knew that the people around him may well have been missing their own sinfulness
  - a. Matt 7:4  
Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me remove the speck from your eye"; and look, a plank is in your own eye? (NKJ)
  - b. Acts 28:4  
When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live (NIV)

## **F. Jesus's great conclusion -- repent or perish likewise**

1. This is a problem of all men, not just a few
  - a. Rom 3:10-12  
As it is written: ""There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one. (NKJ)
  - b. Rom 3:23  
for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (NKJ)
2. Judgment is the fate of all because of sin, not just a few
  - a. Rom 6:23  
For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NKJ)
  - b. Rom 8:6  
For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. (NKJ)
  - c. Rev 21:8  
But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (NKJ)

## **II. THE PARABLE**

### **A. It is at this point that Jesus tells the parable of the barren fig tree**

1. A man planted a fig tree in his vineyard
2. For the third year, he had come expecting to gather figs, but it was barren -- it did not produce any fruit
3. To the keeper of the vineyard, he said that it should be cut down, since it was just using up the ground for nothing
4. But the keeper asked for one more year, during which time he would dig around it, fertilize it, and try one more time to get it to bear fruit
5. But even the keeper agreed that if it still didn't bear fruit the next year, it would have to go

## **B. What this parable teaches**

1. The fig tree had a purpose that was unfulfilled -- bear fruit
  - a. Israel had failed because of their sin and rebellion
  - b. Amos 6:12  
Do horses run on rocks? Does one plow there with oxen?  
Yet you have turned justice into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood, (NKJ)
2. The fig tree had opportunity that was squandered
  - a. it had the same to work with as any tree in the vineyard
  - b. it had the same soil, rain, sun and care from the keeper
  - c. but it still didn't produce
3. The fig tree was subject to the same judgment as any other tree
  - a. if it didn't bear fruit, it would be destroyed
  - b. it is a kind of "bottom line" decision that is the prerogative of the owner of the vineyard
4. The fig tree was blessed with mercy and grace
  - a. by all rights, the tree could have been cut down right then
  - b. but the keeper pleaded it's case and got it one more year

## **C. The parable summarizes the problem between God and man**

1. As the creator (owner) God has a right to expect his creation to bear the fruit that is consistent with its purpose and opportunity
2. Man's sin is represented by the unfruitfulness of the fig tree -- sin is falling short, failure, lack of fruit
3. God is within his right to declare judgment and call for his unfruitful creation to be destroyed
4. Just as the tree had opportunity to become fruitful, so God gives man the chance to repent, to change his mind and actions, and become a fruitbearer
5. Repentance is the key factor in the parable
  - a. Matt 3:7-8  
But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, ""Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, (NKJ)
  - b. Matt 9:13  
But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. (NKJ)
  - c. Acts 3:19  
Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, (NKJ)

d. Acts 26:19-20

Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. (NKJ)

e. 2 Pet 3:9-12

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? (NKJ)

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## CONCLUSION

### A. Jesus provides us with the grace and mercy we need

1. Because of our sin, he died as a means of forgiveness
2. He provides the motivation for repentance in fruit barren people
3. He gives us the chance to bear fruit for God

### B. Christians should be people who are loaded with fruit

1. Matt 12:33

Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. (NKJ)

2. Matt 13:23

But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (NKJ)

3. John 15:2

Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. (NKJ)

4. John 15:4-5

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (NKJ)

5. John 15:16

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. (NKJ)

6. Rom 7:4

Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another-- to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. (NKJ)

**C. Invitation**