

## Wednesday Evening Bible Study

November 6, 2019

The Gospel of Luke

*The Parable of the Fig Tree*

Topics – Luke 13; repentance; parable of the fig tree

Text – Luke 13:1 - 9

### Introduction

We are in a portion of the Gospel of Luke where we are in exclusive territory, meaning that the events that we see here are not included in any of the other gospel accounts. The events that take place in chapter thirteen and following are all during the last year of Jesus' earthly ministry and are also all geographically centered in Jerusalem.

The first two of these events found in chapter thirteen both picture things associated with salvation. The first has to do with repentance, and the second has to do with fruitfulness. In order to be a Christian, a person needs to be repent, and then fruitfulness is a characteristic of all of those who are truly saved.

#### I. Jesus Comments on Local Tragedies (Luke 13:1 – 5)

This passage is only found in Luke's gospel.

Two Stories:

**A The Galileans Slain by Pilate**

**B 18 Killed by the Tower of Siloam**

Three lessons that we can learn from this passage:

1. Recognize that when people have trouble, it does not necessarily mean that they are great sinners. And, it does not mean that you are superior to folks that are having troubles.

2. We are all headed for a similar destruction ultimately (eternally) unless we repent and turn to Christ. I have defined repentance (μετανοέω – *metanoēō*) as a change of mind that produces a change of both attitude and action. The Greek word literally means to think again, or to rethink. It is more than just a mental process, though. Repentance in itself is not salvation, but it is necessary for a person to be saved. It is the other side of the coin of faith.

Repentance is not godly sorrow – but godly sorrow leads to salvation:

*"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." (2 Corinthians 7:10)*

Repentance comes when:

- a. We are confronted with truth.
- b. We are convicted by God's Holy Spirit.
- c. We are contrite in our attitude toward the truth.

d. We conform to the truth. (James 1:22 – 25; 2:12)

3. Tragedy happens to all people – you are not exempt from trouble. God may be allowing you to see these tragedies in order to wake you up, bring you closer to God.

Illustration – 9-11 woke us all up. More tragedies are coming which will wake us up some more.

## II. Parable of the Fig Tree (Luke 13:6 – 9)

In this parable we have a fruitless fig tree, which is symbolic of the nation Israel. Notice the reference to three years. It was three years that Jesus walked the earth trying to reach Israel, but to no avail.

Israel is still today in rejection of the Lord Jesus, and as a result of that they are still fruitless. They have been living in tribulation for a long time, and it is only going to get worse for them. All of these events taking place in the Middle East are positioning these countries for a unilateral move against Israel. Unfortunately, Israel will not start bearing fruit until she turns to Christ.

Individual Christians will produce fruit if their conversion is a genuine one (See Galatians 5:16 – 25).

Practical lessons from this passage:

1. We need to work with people in order to get them to bear fruit.
2. We need to be patient – give them time to grow.

## III. Jesus Heals on the Sabbath (Luke 13:10 – 17)

The next account given to us in chapter thirteen has to do with a woman who had a “spirit of infirmity” and was “bowed together” (*συγκύπτω* – *sygklyptō*), meaning she was stooped over. This healing took place on the Sabbath day and in the synagogue, which means that it was done very blatantly and publicly. It was not hidden.

According to McArthur, a synagogue was “the place where Jewish people gathered for worship (“synagogue” is a transliteration of a Gr. word meaning “to gather together”). Synagogues originated in the Babylonian captivity after the 586 b.c. destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar. They served as places of worship and instruction. Jesus frequently taught in the synagogues (cf. v. 39; 3:1; 6:2), as did Paul (cf. Acts 13:5; 14:1; 17:1).”<sup>1</sup>

Notice that the Lord clearly attributes this infirmity to Satan. Paul also called his infirmity “the messenger of Satan” (2 Corinthians 12:7).

The ruler of the synagogue was upset about this and rebukes the people because it took place on the Sabbath, and stated that Jesus should have healed this woman during the six work days. Jesus replies by stating that there are many things that might be considered work that are

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1459.

allowed and acceptable to do on the Sabbath. He inquires as to why then would the healing of a woman who was in great distress and discomfort on the Sabbath be inappropriate. Notice in this case that Jesus' logic ruled the day. What he had said made perfect sense. What he did to the woman was the right thing to do.

Turn to Matthew 12:9 – 14. In this case the religious leaders use a man who is hurting as a pawn in their attempt to trap the Lord Jesus.

*"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier [matters] of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. [Ye] blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. [Thou] blind Pharisee, cleanse first that [which is] within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead [men's] bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." (Matthew 23:23-28)*

Conclusion – We read these stories and we are quick to point out the abuse of the religious leaders, but at the same time we understand the frustration of a religious leader who wants to stress obedience to the Sabbath day rules.

I want to contend that it is certainly right to do well on Sunday, which is (arguably) our Sabbath day. We also know that we are under no "law" to go to church, but understand that God does stress the importance of gathering together, not only on Sunday, but whenever the local church meets together. We have to be careful determining what is and is not acceptable for skipping church.