

Luke 13

Verses 1-5:

--There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 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? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. 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? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

--(1) We don't know the historical context of this brutal event. Pilate was a cruel ruler and probably had numerous violent acts under his reign.

--We also don't know why they were speaking about it. Maybe to see what Jesus would say to the political gossip of the day? Because they thought they were better than Galileans? If Jesus' response tells us anything, it seems they thought God had judged them as sinners.

--Jesus uses modern tragic news to speak to them personally.

--First, He makes it clear that a tragic death is not proof of God's direct judgment on secret or heinous sin. Twice, He asks if the crowd thought those who died were **worse sinners**, and directly answers, **I tell you, no**.

--God has placed each of us in a sinful world in the best possible place to find Him despite the fact that He is not far from each one of us. **(Acts 17:26-28)**.

--Tragedies are a part of life. *Avalanche, drunk driving, soldiers, cancer, etc.*

--Second, Jesus makes clear the real issue in life is eternal safety through conversion. Twice, He says to the crowd, **but unless you repent you will all likewise perish**.

--Certainly, many Jews would be killed by a hostile Roman army in 70AD, but I believe Jesus is making the application wider.

--Repentance is a must for **all**. Not just the really bad exceptions Vs. the "good people" out there in the world. **All** must repent of what *they are* as well as what *they do*.

--The repentant person stops judging and allows God to judge. Like the prodigal son, they have come to their senses, and can confess they have sinned against heaven and others.

*Tozer (Paths to Power): *"In the things-which-God-cannot-do category is this: God cannot do our repenting for us. In our efforts to magnify grace we have so preached the truth as to convey the impression that repentance is a work of God. This is a grave mistake, and one which is taking a frightful toll among Christians everywhere. God has commanded all men to repent. It is a work which only they can do. It is morally impossible for one person to repent for another. Even Christ could not do this. He could die for us, but He cannot do our repenting for us."**

Verses 6-9:

--*He also spoke this parable: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.'"*

--(6) As many times before, Jesus speaks truth and then adds a parable to illustrate that truth.

The fig tree was typical of Israel (**Hosea 9:10; Joel 1:7+12; Mk. 11:12-14**).

--(7) Was this the three years of Jesus' ministry? Either way, the tree did not have the proper quality of life to produce fruit.

--(8-9) Mercy is given, extra time to see if the tree would show life.

--There is no conclusion to the story because *the listeners* would conclude the story for themselves. The emphasis is to seek God while He may be found.

--Fruitless trees have an expiration date.

Verses 10-13:

--*Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.*

--(10) This is Jesus' last recorded teaching in a synagogue. Fittingly, He is once again in a position of conflict between the will of God and the unbiblical tradition of the religious leaders.

--(11) A woman, who has literally been bent over double for eighteen years, comes into the synagogue presumably looking for healing (**14**).

--Her *spirit of infirmity* was something with a satanic spiritual source (**16**). Luke gives us a declaration, not an explanation of that fact.

--(12-13) *Jesus saw her. . . He called her. . . He laid His hands on her. . .* What a beautiful trio! Jesus sees. Jesus calls. Jesus touches. Jesus moves first, and the woman responds.

--What is the result? Eighteen years of bondage are immediately loosed. The miracle was so clearly an act of God that the people began to glorify God (Even though their eyes couldn't see the power of spiritual freedom!).

Verses 14-17:

--But the ruler of synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day."

The Lord then answered him and said, "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.

--(14) The religious leader is too scared to rebuke Jesus, so he rebukes the crowd praising God. Don't they know people who want to be healed should come any other day of the week for healing and not on the Sabbath?!

--The religious leaders were so blind! On their Sabbath, the lame wouldn't walk, withered hands would stay withered, the hungry would go without food, and those bound by Satan would remain in bondage.

--But not on Jesus' Sabbath! Praise God!

--(15) **Hypocrites!** Jesus calls out their public hypocrisy, pointing out that they would all recognize the needs of their personal animals but were willingly ignoring the needs of the people they were supposedly ministering to.

--(16) See the contrast of **ought to work** in 14 Vs. Jesus' **ought not** here.

--Jesus says this woman was **a daughter of Abraham**. . . which I believe had to mean more than simply a descendant by blood. I think Jesus was saying she came in faith (to the very God of Abraham!) to be healed of her condition.

--In that case, not only was it right for one to do good like healing on the Sabbath, the Sabbath as a picture of rest from God was *the most fitting day for her to be set free from her bondage!*

Leviticus 26:13: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves; I have broken the bands of your yoke and made you walk upright.

--Jesus has compassion on those bound, and especially on those bound for years. He sees them, calls them, and wants them to find freedom and rest at His touch.

--(17) Then **His adversaries** (O what a horrible title!) are ashamed. Those who are at odds with the Lord Jesus Christ should be ashamed now rather than in eternity!

--When a true work of God happens, and the kingdom of God is present, all should rejoice in the glorious things done by Him!

Verses 18-21:

--Then He said, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches."

And again He said, "To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."

--(18-19) **Then He said.** . . ties this teaching to the context of what just happened. The context is: The kingdom of God is evidently present, making one crowd angry and ashamed, while the other crowd is set free and glorifying God.

--I believe that context is central to the interpretation of the parables. Most interpret these parables in one of two ways:

1) They picture the unique outer and inner growth of the kingdom of God.

2) They picture the unique outer and inner growth of the kingdom of God despite harboring bad outer and inner characters.

--Clearly, only the second interpretation fits the context.

--The small mustard seed growing into a large tree pictures the humble beginnings and large miraculous structure of the work of God.

--The **birds of the air** are negative in Jesus' parables (**Mk. 4:4; Lk. 8:5**). They are neutral in some of Jesus' other teachings (**Mt. 6:26; 8:20**). They also go from being unclean to clean in (**Acts 10:12+11:6**).

--When there is varied interpretation, I believe context should retain the greatest interpretative weight, as well as previous parabolic teaching (What Jesus already taught them that those original disciples would think of most immediately, which would be the parable of the Sower, where the birds illustrated satanic influence).

--Those interpretive rules give greater weight to this parable being a picture of the miraculous superstructure of God's kingdom providing a place for "invaders" who are not the fruit of the tree itself.

--(20-21) **And again He said.** . . makes this a similar teaching.

--**To what shall I liken.** . . The kingdom of God is like these things. Jesus is not saying *all there is to say about the kingdom of God*. Jesus is saying *something* about it. Not everything.

--Three measures of meal was a lot of dough! Even so, the leaven pervades it all.

--**Leaven** always pictures a negative pervading influence in the Scripture. There is no *biblical* precedent to say leaven pictures a neutral influence. You can say this is a unique biblical occasion, but to do so recklessly ignores context and biblical precedent.

--Leaven was the inner doctrine of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herod (**Mt. 16:11-12; Mk. 8:15**), and their outward hypocrisy (**Lk. 12:1**). It also typified the unrepentant wickedness of rebellious professed Christians needing to be put out of the fellowship in church discipline (**1 Cor. 5:6-8**); and the bondage creating and grace destroying doctrine of the Judaizers (**Gal. 5:9**).

--Jesus' parable pictures growth with admixture.

--These parables are warnings for His listeners, as this was true of the Jewish religion in Jesus' day, and for us, as it will again be true of the Church before the return of Jesus Christ (**2 Tim. 3:1-9; Rev. 2-3**).

Verses 22-23a:

--And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?"

--(22) Jesus continues the journey He began in **9:51**, in no hurry, stopping in whatever city or village welcomes Him.

--(23) Along the path, someone asks Him a good question. **Are there few who are saved?** Strange as it may seem, it was a good question. There were few who received Christ in the flesh! In the end, even when over 500 saw Him resurrected, we find only 120 in the upper room waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit as He commanded them.

--The question must have seemed very practical to a disciple, but Jesus will answer by making it even more practical.

--Jesus will indirectly admit **many** will be shut out, but He directly makes the question of salvation *personal* instead of *hypothetical*. He answers by making everyone think, *Will I be saved or shut out?*

Verses 23b-30:

--And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.' There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last."

--(23-24) Jesus basically says, let's not talk about other people, let's talk about you! **I say to you.** . . the **you** there is plural: *You all, Y'all, You's.*

--**Strive.** . . means to *agonize* and was used for competing in athletic games, fighting with adversaries, contending with difficulties, or striving to attain something. It pictures strenuous and focused effort.

--Jesus is encouraging personal and serious focus on entering salvation **through the narrow gate**. The way is narrow. There is only one door. One way. One Messiah. One Mediator between God and man. One righteousness accepted by God. One faith. One name given among men by which we must be saved!

--Why should we strive seriously to consider our own salvation? Because Jesus says many **will seek to enter and will not be able**. Why? He tells us.

--**(25-27)** Because at some point, the Master of the house will rise up and shut the door. When the door is shut, striving will no longer matter. All striving then will be too late.

--When will the door shut? We don't know. That is the point! Today is the acceptable day of salvation. Take seriously God's offer and mercy this very day. Are you seriously pressing to be sure about your salvation, or actively and genuinely pursuing sin?

--Very similar to **Mt. 7:13-14**, Jesus says those without will say **Lord, Lord**, and claim some type of familiarity with Him. They ate and drank with Him. They heard His teaching. They were near Him and claimed Him as Lord, at least verbally.

--This is a picture of those who don't want to be direct adversaries of Jesus Christ, they don't want to be at odds with Him, but they are. They have some interaction (go to church, or at least did, weddings, funerals, sickness, old age, etc.), but He is not truly their Lord. He is not their aim in life.

--How do I know that? Jesus tells us twice! **I do not know you (25+27)** is repeated. This is not the loss of salvation. It is the lack of salvation. These individuals were *never* known.

1 Corinthians 6:17+8:3: But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. . . But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.

--**Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.** . . tells us that is who they are. Their lives are characterized by iniquity. Their fruit was constantly wicked in God's sight. The fruit of their thoughts, their lips, and their lives. *Not just evil works in human sight but in God's sight—think of the Pharisees and Judas.*

--**(28-29)** Will we be shut out or shut in? We cannot make our move *after* He has made His.

--Sadly, Jesus infers that the lost will have a knowledge of what was lost. At least we see that much in **(Lk. 16:19-31)**, the only words we have from the lips of the lost in Hades.

--Still, no one will be in hell because God isn't merciful. The narrow gate will be found and entered from every corner of the earth! Every tribe, tongue, and nation will come and **sit down in the kingdom of God**.

--Wicked men and women will be rejected by God because they first rejected His mercy in offering them another path, another gate, an open door.

--**(30)** This seems to be a spiritual maxim. A truth describing the way the kingdom of God works. The principle will be true despite its different applications.

--This lesson would be a hard one for those early Jewish disciples of Christ to swallow, but it was true nonetheless.

Verses 31-33:

--On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, "Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You."

And He said to them, "Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.' Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.

--It is easy to forget that Jesus ministered under constant threat, but though that is true, this "heads up" from the Pharisees seems disingenuous.

--Jesus' irregular response unveils a level of treachery and a clear secret understanding between the religious leaders and Herod (**Mk. 3:6**).

*Godet (Gospel of Luke): *"Instead of issuing a command, as becomes a king, he degrades himself to play the part of an intriguer. Not daring to show the teeth of the lion, he uses the tricks of the fox."**

--Despite their subtle entrapments, Jesus will not be intimidated from His course. He knows the plan for His life is set, and He will continue on that path day by day, as the saying **today, tomorrow, and the day following** seems to imply.

--Being **perfected** carries the idea of being completed (**Jn. 19:28**). Jesus was already morally perfect, but His mission had not yet been accomplished or fulfilled.

--Jesus' reference to Jerusalem seems to mean that as a true prophet, His rightful place to perish would be in Jerusalem and not another city. Which leads to the following expression of His heart.

Verses 34-35:

--O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"

--**(34)** Jerusalem had a sad history of killing and persecuting the messengers of God from the very beginning. That was Jerusalem's past history (**Isa. 1:21; Ez. 24:6**), the present history with Jesus Christ and the apostles, and will be the future history with the anti-christ.

--I believe this is an earlier expression of Jesus' heart and not a repeat of **Mt. 23:37-39**. Jesus is thinking of His life and death. He knows where He is headed and what it will mean for His people.

--His will was to gather them like children! To protect under the shadow of His wing. That still is His will **(1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9)**.

--**(35)** But their will was contrary to His will, and refusing Him, they were left alone to defend themselves like chicks without a mother. ***See! Your house is left to you desolate.*** . . . means you are hopelessly on your own. *Grace can be resisted, or language no longer has meaning. Clearly, their will is pitted against His, and the ultimate cause of their judgment.*

--Jesus' public ministry to the Jewish crowds would be gone after the crucifixion, and the gospel would go into all the world. That said, His private ministry to disciples would continue in personal manifestation.

--Until Christ returns and is recognized by His own people as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords **(Ps. 118:26; Zech. 12:10; Rev. 1:7)**.