

Parable Of The Barren Fig Tree

Luke 13:1-9

The Context

Luke 13:1-5, some reported to Jesus about some *“Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.”*

- According to historians such as Josephus, the Galileans were notoriously wicked and were known for the tumults and uprisings they caused.
- As far as the historical context is concerned, *Pilate and Herod* (who had jurisdiction over the Galileans) **were at odds** with each other (Luke 23:12).
- It is reasonable to conclude that Pilate would have some hostility towards Herod’s subjects.

The Context

- Reportedly some Galileans had incited some trouble in the temple while sacrifices were being offered and Pilate responded by having his soldiers attack and slay them; thus their blood being *“mingled with their sacrifices.”*
- **It is news of this recent event** that those in attendance that day reported to Jesus.

The Context

Jesus’ response indicates that those who asked had **“supposed”** that **these events happened to the Galileans as just punishment for their sins.**

Jesus also noted another incident in which 18 people were killed when the tower in Siloam fell - was that due to their sin?

- To both situations Jesus answers **“I tell you no”**

The Context

Similar questions are raised in:

- John 9:1-2 regarding the man born blind.
- Acts 28:4 when the viper attacked Paul.
- The common notion is that all bad things happen because we deserve it.
 - Not an argument against Galatians 6:7
 - In both the examples above, God providentially used these situations to **teach** and **“change peoples minds”** (Acts 28:6).

The Purpose

Twice, Jesus turns the **focus** back on those who asked by saying to them **“*but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.*”**

- **The purpose** of getting those Jews who asked the question to **focus on their own spiritual condition** before God.

The Purpose

It is to be our purpose in studying this parable to turn our attention to our own spiritual condition before God.

In Luke 13, those who were present were **more focused on the supposed sinfulness of these Galileans than they were on themselves.**

“Lord and what about this man?”, John 21:21

Fig Trees in Scriptures

Figs were an important part of the diet of the Jews and fig trees were prominent in the promised land from the time they spied out the land (Numbers 13:23).

The **fig tree therefore came to symbolize peace and security within the land** that God had blessed them with (1 Kings 4:25; 2 Kings 18:31) and was even used **prophetically in reference to the time of the Messianic kingdom** (Micah 4:2-4; Zechariah 3:10).



Fig Trees in Scriptures

On the other hand, the OT prophets used the depiction of a **barren fig tree to represent apostate conditions** worthy of **God's divine judgment** (Jeremiah 8:8-13; Habakkuk 3:16-19).



Key Spiritual Principles

Repentance -

- Jesus was focusing on the need for man to repent in order to be pleasing to God.
 - Luke 5:32; 15:7
- Luke 13:3 is (appropriately) often cited as a key passage in discussions on the topic of repentance.
 - **We need to appreciate the context in which it was spoken.**

What true repentance is all about. 2 Corinthians 7:8-11

- Not just sorrow.
- Earnestness.
- Vindication
- Indignation.
- Longing
- Zeal
- Avenging of wrong
- Demonstration of innocence.

Key Spiritual Principles

Bearing fruit -

- **The application to the Jews of that day** - if they didn't respond to the Lord's message, the opportunity would be given to another to bear fruit (Matthew 21:43).
- **A badge of discipleship.** (John 15:8)
- The fruit they were to bear **began with repentance** (Matthew 3:8).
- We've got to find a way to make ourselves **“useful to the Master”** (2 Timothy 2:19-26).

Key Spiritual Principles

Bearing fruit -

- **The application for us-** God expects us to “*bear fruit*” (John 15:16; Romans 7:4; John 15:4-5; Luke 8:15).
- **God expects some return from us as stewards** (cf. Matthew 25:14ff) - requires we work for His sake (Colossians 1:10).
- **There is much fruit to bear in our lives** (Galatians 5:22-23).
- By reason of time...
- What will keep us from being productive servants of God?

Key Spiritual Principles

God’s patience -

- This parable, vineyard keeper is represented by Jesus & the land owner by God.
- After owner had looked for fruit for 3 years - the judgment was made to “*cut it down.*”
- **The vineyard keeper asked for more time** to continue to do all he could to help the tree bear fruit and give it one more year to try. **But finally, judgment would be rendered.**
 - 2 Peter 3:9

Key Spiritual Principles

God’s patience -

- The only reason God has not brought us into judgment? **To give us more time to make our lives right with Him.** 2 Peter 3:14-15.
- Jesus’ mission was not to bring judgment upon man but to **provide both the teaching & the sacrifice that would allow man to once again bear fruit.** (John. 3:17; 12:47-48)
- **We must not take “lightly” God’s patience** (Romans 2:4) & appreciate the time God has given to us to make things right with Him.
 - Exodus 34:6-7

Key Spiritual Principles

Accountability -

- In the parable, Jesus referenced some time in the future when there would be a reckoning as to whether the tree produced any fruit or not.
- At some point, God will exercise judgment upon those who bear no fruit.
- Matthew 21:19

Key Spiritual Principles

Accountability -

- Matthew 3:10-11; 7:19 - “*every tree ... that does not bear good fruit is cut down...*”
- God will “*settle accounts*” w/each one of us & we will be held accountable for fruit that we should have produced (Matthew 25:19ff).
- God has done everything possible to enable us to be productive (Isaiah 5:4; Romans 8:31-32) and He expects us to produce good fruit (Isaiah 5:2).
- God will exercise judgment upon those who fail to produce (Isaiah 5:5-6).

We will be known by our fruit...

- So, if we wish to be approved by God, we need to focus on making the tree what it needs to be. Matthew 12:33, “*either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit.*”
- *There’s only one way to make the tree good - your obedience to the gospel!*