

The One With a Dead Fig Tree

Luke 13:6-9

Parables series #6

February 12, 2023

PreSermon Comments

- Imagining the kingdom
- Today's story and parable are unique to Luke's gospel

Information

- Super Bowl ads promise "the good life": cars, beer, chalupas
- **(big idea)** How do we define "the good life"? How should we?
- If it was the ANE world: donkey, wine, figs

Fig Tree

- Planted with vineyards | Luke 13:6
- Symbol of "the good life" | 1 Kings 4:25 — *And Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beersheba, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon.*
 - (Also Song of Songs 2:13 — *The fig tree ripens its figs; the blossoming vines give off their fragrance. Arise, my darling. Come away, my beautiful one.*)
- Symbol for Israel | Hosea 9:10 — *Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree in its first season, I saw your fathers.*

Craig Blomberg The vineyard was a stock metaphor for Israel. Sitting under one's own vine and fig tree and enjoying their produce became a frequent Old Testament image of the Israelite enjoying freedom and prosperity in the land.

Israel was God's plan to restore "the good life" to the whole world!

- All things created good: every good tree—including fig!—in the garden
- Adam and Eve believed the serpent's lie, that God was *holding out* on them the good life
- Immediately filled with shame, sewed fig leaves together
- God's promise to Abraham, bring back blessing and abundance to all the earth
 - Whole OT is God wrestling with the people who also believe the lie
- God's judgment against them in the Exile (**read Jeremiah 24 fig parable**)
- Now back in the land, and they want to make it back like the days of Solomon
- Jesus shows up talking about the kingdom of God, him as Messiah
 - "Oh yeah, here it comes! The good life for everybody!!"

Public Tragedy

Luke 13¹ At that time, some people came and reported to him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

- No other record, but Pilate's cruelty fully known. Some sort of temple killing

²And he responded to them, “Do you think that these Galileans were more sinful than all the other Galileans because they suffered these things?”

- Interesting interjection from Jesus; safely infer this was part of the conversation.
 - “Man, they must have really done something wrong to get that kind of punishment!”

³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as well.

- Brings it to repentance

⁴Or those eighteen that the tower in Siloam fell on and killed

- Another public tragedy, more of an accident this time around

—do you think they were more sinful than all the other people who live in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as well.”

- Jesus here is addressing a very common misconception: “*want the good life? Just be good! Those people had something bad happen to them, therefore they must have been bad!*”
 - All suffering is the result of sin, a fallen and broken world
 - Sometimes, suffering comes as a result of a specific sin
 - But NO, not all suffering is a 1:1 result of some specific sin

A Figgy Parable

Luke 13 ⁶And he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree that was planted in his vineyard.

- He’s building a place for the good life

He came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷He told the vineyard worker, ‘Listen, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any.

- **Lev. 19:23-24** says “no eating the fruit for 3 years, 4th year given to the Lord.” So 7 years? Cut it down! Why should it even waste the soil?” ⁸“But he replied to him, ‘Sir, leave it this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹Perhaps it will produce fruit next year, but if not, you can cut it down.’”

- What happens next?!?! Jesus doesn’t say, leaves it open-ended...

(big question) How does Jesus define this fruitful, abundant, good life?

Abundant Fruit

Luke 3 ⁷He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” ⁸Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ⁹Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

The Counterfeit Good Life

- Pleasure | Take what feels good
 - Eve in the garden, Super Bowl commercials
- Pride | Behave in a good way
 - These people in the story (ch 13), religious fruit *look at my morality*
 - By the way, secular fundamentalism and pride reign supreme now too

- Productivity | Prove that you're good
 - Yes Jesus wants results (parable of the talents), but there's also the "Lord, didn't we drive out demons in your name...?"
- Position | Gain a status that is good
 - "Our father is Abraham" | Maybe less in our culture: classism, the family you're born

Each of these is a distortion because of what it's missing: **REPENTANCE**

- Both this interaction in Luke 3 and the parable of Luke 13 say the same thing:
- Bear fruits in keeping with repentance.

Fruit with Repentance

- Pleasure -> Satisfaction
- Pride -> Sanctification
- Productivity -> Spiritual fruit
- Position -> Seated with Christ

(big idea) True abundant, fruitful life begins and ends with a lifestyle of repentance

True Repentance

...turns from both sinful pleasure and pride

- No clawing for position, no proving yourself with productivity
- Despairing of self and a confession of deep, profound need

...does not presume upon God's patience

- A weeks ago (mustard seed), we spoke of God *radical, excessive* patience
 - In this parable, many years of waiting and working
- However, his patience is not forever
- Those who live a lifestyle of unrepentance (nonChristian) will be cut down

Charles Spurgeon To all unprofitable, unfruitful sinners, we utter this hard, but needful sentence: to cut you down would be most reasonable.

...often comes from digging and dung

- *How can we get this tree to bear fruit? Tear up the soil, put some manure around*
- In our lives, God often uses disturbances, difficulties, crap to get our attention

...turns to the advocate

- This is NOT about something that you can do on your own, just another "work" to do
- Some debate about the characters in the story, God the Father and Son? *Maybe...*
- Without being overly-specific or allegorical, we clearly see and advocate

Charles Spurgeon Our text represents the gardener as only asking to have it spared; but Jesus Christ did something more than ask; he pleaded, not with his mouth only, but with pierced hands, and pierced feet, and pierced side; and those prevailing pleas have moved the heart of God, and you are yet spared.

Imagining the Kingdom

1. Where do you seek “the good life” apart from a lifestyle of repentance?
2. In a world of pleasure, pride, position, and productivity, how do we live as citizens of the kingdom?
3. How can we explain repentance to those who *think* that they hate the idea?

The Lord’s Table

**Alternate Passage*

Luke 22 ¹⁴ And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” ¹⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” ¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁰ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

Scripture Reading

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