

Lesson 1 29 October 2017

"Except Ye Repent"

Lesson Scope: [Luke 13](#)

References in brackets refer to Luke 13 unless otherwise noted

Lesson Focus

Jesus used the conversation and questions of those around Him to draw lessons from the issues of the day. Then He often turned the discussion toward a deeper spiritual teaching. Jesus took interest in the troubles of those who came to Him, but He had a deeper concern for their souls and turned the conversation to their heart condition.

In the preceding chapters, Jesus had sternly denounced hypocrisy and tenderly described those who truly "seek ... the kingdom of God." The teachings on issues of repentance and fruitfulness, which are the steps from hypocrisy to truly following God, naturally grow out of these former teachings. Jesus' teachings command a response. Those who have repented "shall come ... and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." The true condition of those with an unrepentant heart is exposed when God says to them, "I know you not."

The opening words of chapter 13 indicate that the teachings and events of 13:1-21 belong to the same context as the preceding chapters. Verse 22 indicates a change in time and place. Verse 31 indicates that Jesus was presently in the domain of Herod Antipas (Herod the Tetrarch), who was tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (the region east of Galilee).

Be careful on the teaching in relating to those who are experiencing tragedy, but do not pass over it. In close-knit communities, and with easy communication, this can be a challenge. We should have a concern for those who are suffering, and passing on the concern and a request for prayer is a right thing to do. However, this always presents the opportunity for gossip and being judgmental. Think through this before class so you are prepared for the questions that could come up in relation to this.

Throughout the lesson, seek to keep the matter of unrepentant hearts in focus. Repentance is essential for salvation. Those who refuse to repent "shall all... perish."

Lesson Aim: To portray involvements of repentance.

Theme Verse: [1 John 1:9](#). If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Lesson Text

A Solemn Warning

[Luke 13:1-5](#) There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? ³ I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

A Barren Tree

[Luke 13:6-9](#) He spake also this parable; A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. ⁷ Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? ⁸ And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: ⁹ And if it bear fruit, *well*: and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down.

A Closed Door

[Luke 13:23-30](#) Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, ²⁴ Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. ²⁵ When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: ²⁶ Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. ²⁷ But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. ²⁸ There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out. ²⁹ And they shall

come from the east, and *from* the west, and from the north, and *from* the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

A Desolate House

Luke 13:31-35 The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. ³² And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and tomorrow, and the third *day* I shall be perfected. ³³ Nevertheless I must walk to day, and tomorrow, and the *day* following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. ³⁴ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen *doth gather* her brood under *her* wings, and ye would not! ³⁵ Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until *the time* come when ye shall say, Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Questions for Study

A Solemn Warning

1. Describe the natural human tendencies that Jesus was exposing in these verses.
2. What should be our response to the calamities of others?

A Barren Tree

3. What may be the meaning of the three fruitless years of the fig tree?
4. What fruit is God looking for in our lives?

A Closed Door

5. What struggles does man encounter when striving to enter the strait gate?
6. On what do people base their false hope of acceptance into the kingdom? What is missing?

A Desolate House

7. What seems to have been the motivation behind the Pharisees' warning in 13:31?
8. What motivated Christ's warning in 13:35?

Analyzing the Passage

The tragic event described in verse 1 naturally would have brought

much concern and discussion. Jesus' response to the discussion indicates that those involved in the discussion likely were pondering what these people had done to deserve such a punishment. Jesus turned their attention to their own heart condition.

The parable of the fig tree seems to represent the nation of Israel. The owner of the vineyard is God, and the dresser of the vineyard is Jesus. The lesson the parable teaches is the continuing failure of the Israelites to accept Jesus, despite God's long forbearance, and God's eventual severity in cutting the Israelites off. The three years of fruitlessness may represent the three years of Jesus' earthly ministry, which the Jewish nation largely rejected.

Jesus answered the question in verse 23 by comparing being saved with entering a strait gate. This strait (narrow) gate is restrictive. Those who choose to enter through the gate need to strive (labor fervently) to enter. Many fail to enter as a result of a halfhearted effort, a lack of commitment, a failure to crucify the flesh, or a lack of truly accepting Jesus' work. Many strive to enter in on their own terms and will find themselves blocked out. All who accept Jesus' work and crucify self can enter in (John 6:37).

The fox was a common metaphor for a cunning person. Herod had a reputation for using very cunning ways to achieve his desires. Jesus, however, knew the truth of the threat and was not afraid. Jesus would continue His earthly ministry according to God's plan until the time was right for His death.

Principles and Applications

A Solemn Warning

1. The unrepentant often fall into the trap of comparing themselves with others (13:1-4). They excuse themselves by reasoning that since no calamity befell them, they must not be deserving of punishment. They believe that those who experienced misfortune must have been sinners above themselves. However, every one of us is undeserving of God's continuing grace and protection. What are our thoughts when we hear of failures or struggles in others' lives? Do we seek out the supposed failures that we believe resulted in punishment when families or congregations experience upheaval?
2. All men are sinners in need of repentance (13:2-5). Jesus deftly shift-

ed the conversation about those who perished as a result of catastrophe by pointing to men's hearts that are perishing because of sin. No one is in less need of repentance or more need of judgment, for all have sinned. Each person needs to choose repentance. Each one needs to say, "Except I repent, I will likewise perish."

A Barren Tree

3. The Lord has a fervent desire to bring men to repentance (13:6-9). "The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). God is not relaxing, waiting for whoever comes. He is actively working to bring man to salvation. He is long-suffering with the unrepentant by extending the time of opportunity. He is searching, calling, convicting, nurturing, and drawing men. Oh, that all would respond in repentance and bear the fruit of salvation!

A Closed Door

4. The unrepentant are unwilling to meet the conditions for entering into the way of life (13:24). The simple truth that Jesus likens to entering a narrow gate is accepting the work of Christ and receiving Him. We must believe and obey Him. However, the narrow way that must be followed is a life restricted from sin and worldliness. Many refuse to enter because they are unwilling to crucify the flesh. They desire salvation without genuine repentance, so they forge another "way" that gives them a false hope of being right with God.

5. The unrepentant may substitute religious profession and activity for true righteousness (13:25-27). We must first of all walk in newness of life and maintain a close relationship with the Lord. Conforming to a set of rules and loyalty to a certain church do not in themselves produce newness of life. Rather, they must issue from a walk in newness of life. Service and missions become a broken crutch if we use them as a substitute for true repentance and a life of righteousness. Unrepentant people often use these things to develop a false hope, believing they are saved while still living in sin.

6. The unrepentant will be barred from the kingdom regardless of their many supposed advantages (13:27-30). Those who have failed to lay hold of God's plan will have no basis for entering the door. No person will enter the kingdom merely by virtue of his heritage or his outward conformity to a particular church. If a person has not allowed God into his heart, he is still a worker of iniquity, and God will not allow a work-

er of iniquity into the heaven He is preparing. There will be many people from all areas of the earth with no visible advantages who will enter on the simple but all-important basis of having repented and accepted Christ's work.

A Desolate House

7. The unrepentant often attempt to silence the messenger of truth (13:31, 32). The Pharisees tried to escape from Jesus' message by frightening Him away. Many today endeavor to intimidate the preacher of the cross. They deceive themselves into thinking that silencing the messenger annuls the message. They may try to control the messenger by their wealth and their contribution to the church. Some seek for another church where cross bearing and discipleship are less expected. Jesus' answer indicates that true power and blessing only come through following the Father's plan.

8. Those who refuse to repent place themselves under divine wrath (13:34-35). Jesus lamented the continued refusal of the Israelites to repent. "And ye would not" clearly states that it was their choice to refuse the truth. Jesus knew the divine wrath they placed themselves under was by choice. "Every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (Romans 14:11). Those who refuse to bow and confess in this life will face the serious consequences of their choice in the life to come.

Important Teachings

1. The unrepentant often fall into the trap of comparing themselves with others (13:1-4).
2. All men are sinners in need of repentance (13:2-5).
3. The Lord has a fervent desire to bring men to repentance (13:6-9).
4. The unrepentant are unwilling to meet the conditions for entering into the way of life (13:24).
5. The unrepentant may substitute religious profession and activity for true righteousness (13:25-27).
6. The unrepentant will be barred from the kingdom regardless of their many supposed advantages (13:27-30).
7. The unrepentant often attempt to silence the messenger of truth (13:31-32).
8. Those who refuse to repent place themselves under divine wrath

(13:34-35).

Answers to Questions

1. Describe the natural human tendencies that Jesus was exposing in these verses.

We all face a tendency to think the person who is facing struggles or calamities must be reaping punishment from God. We tend to want to search out the reason for the calamity others are facing—in a judgmental way. The assumptions of reasons for punishment can become conversation pieces and gossip that does not edify.

2. What should be our response to the calamities of others?

It is only by God's mercy and protection that we have been spared. We need to sympathize with, console, encourage, reach out to, and at times donate to help those who have faced loss of possessions, their health, or a loved one. We should allow those calamities to speak to us, that we would be sure that we are ready at any time.

3. What may be the meaning of the three fruitless years of the fig tree?

Israel, like the fig tree, had been brought to a place where she should have been producing fruit. Yet, throughout the three years of Jesus' earthly ministry, Israel as a whole failed to bring forth fruit.

4. What fruit is God looking for in our lives?

"Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:8). The Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)

"Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing" (Psalm 100:2).

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)

"He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God" (2 Timothy 2:15).

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

5. What struggles does man encounter when striving to enter the strait gate?

Man faces a struggle of the will and of the mind. Man must struggle against the flesh, which shrinks from being crucified. Man faces the struggle of the fallen human nature. Man also must struggle against the power of Satan working to prevent each one from entering the gate.

6. On what do people base their false hope of acceptance into the kingdom? What is missing?

People base their false hope on whatever they can grasp to give them hope. They use whatever they can reason in their minds to quell their conscience. Some use their good works. Others lean on their godly parents. Some look to conformity to a church or to Sunday morning church attendance. All these fail if they are not coupled with genuine repentance and acceptance of God's work.

7. What seems to have been the motivation behind the Pharisees' warning in 13:31?

The Pharisees were not trying to protect Jesus. Rather, they may have been trying to trap Jesus themselves. They did not want Him in the temple or in Jerusalem teaching. They attempted to remove the Teacher so His teaching would not condemn their consciences.

8. What motivated Christ's warning in 13:35?

Christ warned out of love and compassion. He continued to desire that everyone would come to repentance, even those who desired His hurt.

Summarizing the Lesson

We all desire to be among those who "shall come ... and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." But have we entered the narrow gate, crucifying the flesh? Are we bearing the fruits of repentance that the Lord is looking for in our lives?

Research Guide

1. Read the article under "Vegetable Kingdom—Fig" in New Unger's Bible Dictionary.
2. Read the section on "Conversion—No Change, No Conversion" in Doctrines of the Bible, page 282.