

Luke 13:1-9 - Repent

(1 Mins) Introduction:

Let's start by coming to God in pray.

Father we give this time over to you. Would our hearts be open to receive from you Word. Would we be receptive, whether for the first time or after a lifetime of walking with you, to respond to you word. In your name Father, Amen.

Let me start with a riddle: I am free yet priceless, you can't own me but you can use me, you can't keep me but you can spend me. Once you've lost me you can never have me back. What am I? - Time

A few weeks ago a group were speaking about hypothetical questions and one of the questions that came up was would it be better to do all of our sleeping at one time and then to be awake for the rest of the time. It's a bit random but it's interesting to think if we could use our time better if we could shift were we spend it. How do we use our time?

(2 Mins) Context:

Now what is your initial thought about judgement? Judgment is a bit of a taboo subject in our culture. We either judge too harshly, or its bad to judge something or someone. But the fact is that we all judge, whether it's stereotyping, our worldview or upbringing, we all judge, rightly or wrongly.

As we arrive at Luke 13 we are in middle of Jesus talking about Judgement. If you read through from Chapter 12 through to when Jesus enters Jerusalem. You'll see Jesus talking about a coming kingdom and a judgment over all humanity. In 12:49-53 we see Jesus explicitly saying he has come to bring division not peace.

Another key thing for our context in Luke 13 is that Jesus is on a Journey to Jerusalem. Chapter 9:51 say Jesus resolutely set out toward Jerusalem. Jesus knew his end location was at the Cross.

As we approach Luke 13 with that context of Judgment and Jesus Journey we can see two areas that Jesus is pointing to in this passage. He wants us to realise the importance of turning from our Sin (or repenting) and to realise that time is an important factor. The stark reality here is that Jesus is pointing to the consequences of living without God, in Sin, with a limited time to make a decision.

(4 Mins) Turn from Sin:

In verses 1-5 we see Jesus pointing out that Turning from Sin and Repenting is really important. We see that twice, with the statement Jesus makes, saying 'But unless you repent, you too will all perish'.

Well to understand that, we need to firstly know what Sin is and then know what it means to Repent.

The definition for Sin is defined as 'an immoral act considered to be a transgression against divine law.' Basically it is doing something wrong against God or what he says is wrong. But it is also found in the nature of humans. The human heart is inclined towards doing wrong. We see this throughout Scripture as a result of Adam and Eves failure to listen to God in the Garden of Eden. Psalm 14 and 53 inspire Romans 3:10-12 which says,

"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

There is no one who does good, all humanity is tainted by the effect of Sin. So Sin flows out in two parts, the acts that arise from doing wrong, which we see all around us. Lying, stealing, cheating etc. But also the fact the human heart is inclined toward sin and separation from God.

In our passage Jesus is showing that people have a wrong understanding of Sin. The common thought in 1st century Jewish culture is that of Sin is a direct consequence of wicked acts. It was believed that if you suffered in a particular way or died as a result of a certain atrocity. Then you must have done something bad to deserve it. And we see that in the two example in our passage.

The first example that is pointed out by the Jews speaking to Jesus is that of Pilate mixing the blood of the Galilean Jews with the blood of the sacrifices. Now there is no more historical record to give us a fuller understanding of this event but it seems that Pilate, for some reason, has killed a number of Galileans Jews whilst there were worshipping and offering sacrifices to God. We've seen on a number of occasions over the last few years shootings in churches and mosques. They are horrific and evil acts. So the Jews in Jerusalem bring this awful act to Jesus' attention. With the implication that the victims must have died in this horrific way because of there evil deeds.

Jesus then brings up another example in response to the first. He talks about the Tower of Siloam falling over and killing 18 people, based in Jerusalem.

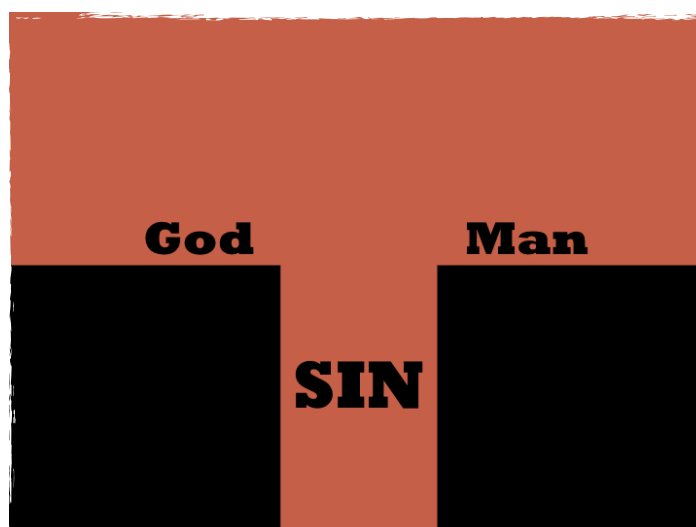
Now, what is interesting here is the relationship between the Jews of Jerusalem and Jews of Galilee. The Jewish community in Jerusalem saw themselves as superior to the Galileans Jews. They felt they were more holy, better at holding to the law and would look down significantly on the northern Jews.

So the Jews based in Jerusalem are quick, and more than happy, to point out that the Jews from Galilee must be particularly sinful. This maybe the reason why Jesus then brings up this second example. To reverse that thought and show a tragedy that has happened in Jerusalem.

The most important message that Jesus wants to get across is that perishing, is not based on who you are or directly linked to what you have done. But that all are going to perish without repentance.

He is pointing out that all humanity is stained by Sin and that, as it says in Romans, 'No one does Good, not even one'. All must repent and turn from Sin to avoid perishing. Jesus is pointing out that everyone is deserving of perishing due to there acts and separation from God.

Nathan used a helpful image when he preached on John 3 a few months ago, It looks like this...



The fact is Sin separates us from God, if we are separate from God, we will ultimately perish and be separated from him forever. So if we want to know God and live with him we must repent and come to him.

Well we can know what Sin is but what does it mean to repent. To repent means to turn back to God. This can look different for many people, for some it's a quick moment, like running and turning on the spot, for other it's like turning an oil tanker around at sea, it can take miles and miles. But when we live without Jesus we are walking further and further away from God until we no longer can turn back to him, until our time is up and we ultimately perish. Hebrews 9:27 puts it like this, 'All are destined to die once, and after that face judgment'. We are all going to physically die. But the question lies with what the outcome of Gods judgment will be on your life. Do we want to perish or do we want turn back to God in repentance?

(4 Mins) Time is of the Fleeting:

In this passage we see the urgency for a decision to be made. Life goes fast, time is fleeting and if we keep bumping our decision down the road to whether we are willing to repent or not. We can quickly run out of time and in essence have our decision made for us.

Within verses 6-9 we see Jesus speaking through a parable of a fig tree.

We see in this parable that a healthy fig tree should produce fruit as should a healthy Christian. If we aren't living life in line with how God teaches then we can quickly find that we may not be producing fruit.

For 3 years this particular fig tree has not produced any fruit, it is wasting time, growth and the ground it has been planted in. We see the gardener asking for another year to help tend and cultivate the tree and to see if it will produce fruit.

The interesting thing about this parable is there is no conclusion to it. The man who owns the tree doesn't say, I will give it more time or this is what we are going to do. And this is a pretty major point. The parable doesn't say you will have a set time to make a decision to repent and produce good fruit. It simple leaves us with the fact that the gardener asks for another year tend and nurture the plant.

My dad is rather into his gardening and he was telling me about fig trees. What was interesting about a fig tree was that its production of fruit isn't always based on being in the prime location for growth. A fig tree can in fact get lazy, if its got all it needs around it and doesn't have to work hard, it may produce nice leaves but won't produce healthy fruit. Whereas a fig tree that has to work hard to gain its nutrients produces better fruit. Now that is a message for the christian life isn't it. We need to be careful. We are so blessed to have access to church, the bible, prayer and fellowship that we can in fact become lazy with it rather than producing good fruit. Whereas, I'm sure many will agree, in times of struggle and trials, that is when we have seen spiritual fruit grow well in our lives.

The two main points to learn from this parable go hand in hand. Firstly God is merciful, we see this in his nature simply through the fact he has given us the opportunity to repent. As we mentioned earlier, 'No one is good, not even one', we are all deserving of perishing because by nature we are sinful. The gardener asks for one more year to tend the fig tree. Even though the owner doesn't say, yes give it another year, the owners mercy is shown in the fact that he doesn't immediately cut down the tree (Even though that is what the tree probably deserves). The second truth is we are living on borrowed time, our deeds and sinful nature mean we are already deserving of being cut down, and that fact is we are not immediately cut down, is a reflection of Gods mercy to us.

(4 Mins) Triumph found at the Cross:

Luke 13:1-9 is serious and should produce an element of fear in all of us. We must make a decision to Repent or Perish and we must understand that we are bound by time.

But there is beauty found here, beauty found in the triumph of the Cross. As I mentioned at the start, this passage is placed in the middle of Jesus' Journey to

Jerusalem. And I want too fast forward to when we see Jesus at that moment before his death.

Jesus knew that his Journey was ultimately ending up at the Cross. His death is the reason that repentance is possible.

So What happened at the Cross...

We are Sinful people,

We deserve to perish because we are sinful.

God in his mercy sent Jesus, perfect, spotless, blameless, to die in our place and become substitute for our sins, so we don't have to endure the punishment we deserve.

Jesus conquered death in the resurrection, defeating sin.

He has blessed those who believe in him abundantly, not only in the removal of our sins but the gifts that he lovingly gives to his children, the ultimate being that of eternal life.

I think one of the most beautiful stories of the triumph in the Cross is seen in the story of the two criminals who were dying next to Jesus in Luke 23:39-43. Both were guilty, both were sinners and both had very different reactions to Jesus. In there most basic forms they are the two reactions that we can have. You see these two criminals on the cross alongside Jesus is a representation of the human choice. We can either throw greed and arrogance at Jesus, choosing to live life our own way. Or we can choose to live in light of Jesus as Lord. The second criminal sums up the state of humanity perfectly 'We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve...'

And what is the criminals request in verse 42, it isn't take me with you, it isn't save my life, free me. It's simply remember me when you come into your kingdom. Humbleness, respect, recognition. He think he is too sinful for Jesus to care about.

But Jesus see the beauty in his understanding, he sees the heart of humbleness, he sees the repentance in the very nature of the criminal. And this is what it looks like to repent.

And how Beautiful is Jesus response, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise'.

This is the true response to the Gospel, when we see the depths of our Sin, when we see the goodness, care, grace and mercy of God, that is when we see the magnitude of the Gospel. God is simply calling us to turn our hearts back to him.

In Joel we get this beautiful example of the call to repent. And it reflects the situation we find ourselves in... Joel is a short book only 3 chapters but we see this image of an invasion and a call to repentance. But the book culminates in this moment, with this powerful army encamped about to bring destruction on those who are sinful, punishment is knocking at the door and is literally about to wipe out

everything. But then it says this in verse 12-13. And it is beautiful, when we think of the depths our sin, how far we are separated from God, when we know that we are deserving of perishing and punishment. Then God says something like this in verse 12-13. ‘

Yet even now, declares the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster’.

You see, this is the God of mercy, he sees your wickedness, he sees how far away from him you are, he sees when you are at the very moment of perishing and he says, ‘Come back to me’. Rend your heart, to rend your heart isn’t just to say sorry but it’s almost a violent term to come back to God with such force and passion. God is completely and utterly devoted for your heart to return to him. He doesn’t want people to suffer, he doesn’t want people to perish. He must remain just and judge rightly but he doesn’t take joy in people not knowing him.

This utter passion and compassion is what the God of the Bible offers us. He upholds justice and rightly and authoritative he brings judgement but he is so compassion to see hearts return to him.

(3 Mins) Application:

As I have been speaking, 20 minutes or so has gone. 20 minutes closer to either making a decision or letting a decision be made for you. Either choosing the option to rejoice in the beauty and treasure that is found in eternal life or living life in this world until the moment of perishing arrives at your door.

In some ways this is the most complex thing you’ll ever decide in life but in another way it’s the most simple thing you’ll ever decide. Either keep kicking the can down the road till the decision to live life without God is made for you, the time limit is up and the countdown clock is over or make the decision now before time runs out.

Repentance is never a one moment action for the Christian life. We know our sins are dealt with once and for all at the Cross but our own walk as a Christian will be littered with Sin and failures. We live in the light of that. Repentance is a continuous act of humbleness before God. It’s knowing that right now, Jesus is at the right hand of God interceding for us.

The simplicity of the Gospel is too, Believe in Jesus, Come to Him and Repent of your Sin. He will grant you life and life to the full.

If that is you, if you want to know Jesus for the first time or even if you need to remind yourself of your commitment to Christ. Then let me leave you with the simple verse found in Romans 10:9.

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

The Gospel provokes so many questions but the crux of the matter is... and this is what I leave you with.

Are you going to repent, to turn back to Jesus and have him as your Lord?

Let us pray before we step into a moment of sung worship.

‘Father, we thank you that you are merciful, that you give the opportunity to repent and turn to you. We pray that we would understand that time is precious, and that we are given an opportunity to believe in you, come to you and to repent. We pray that we would live fruitful lives. And we pray that we would all consider that declaration in Romans 10:9. Whether for the very first time or as a reminder, that Jesus is Lord. In you holy and precious name. Amen.’