

Encounter with the King - Luke 13

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Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0 : 00] So Luke 13, 1-9, and that's page 1046.

Now there are some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way?

I tell you no, but unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those 18 who died when the Tower of Siloam fell on them, do you think that they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?

I tell you no, but unless you repent, you too will all perish. Then he told this parable. A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but he did not find any.

So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, For three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down. Why should it use up the soil?

[1 : 20] Sir, the man replied, Leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig it round and fertilise it. If it bears fruit next year, fine.

If not, then cut it down. Let's start.

Respect. Thank you.

Four parables from the Gospel of Luke, and each one of them have a theme to do with the coming again of the Lord Jesus, or in some way how the return of the Lord Jesus should affect us in our lives.

This morning we're looking at Luke chapter 13, verses 1 to 9, and it's that kind of parable and the surrounding conversation with Jesus that raises all sorts of questions.

[2 : 46] Now, I'm going to say I'm not going to answer every possible question that may arise from it, so you may want to talk to me afterwards or talk to other people, but we will try and work through the text as best as possible.

So let's ask for God's help as we do that together. Our Father God, again, we thank you for your word and for its truth, and yet we realize that in reading your truth, it raises many questions and confronts us with difficult things.

And so we pray as we read it that we would have understanding with our minds. You would give us acceptance in our hearts, and that you would cause us to live and to submit our lives rightly before you to all that we hear from you.

We pray that the coming of the Lord Jesus would shape us and change us into the kind of people you would have us be.

We pray it in your name and for your glory. Amen. Amen. Amen. The other morning I woke up very early.

[4 : 35] It's not a usual habit of mine, but I did on this particular morning, and I wasn't able to get back to sleep. So I went downstairs to catch up on some blogs that I like to read.

One caught my attention. It was entitled, Live Each Day As If It Were Your Last. And as I read through it, it directed me to take part in what was called the UBLE test, U-B-B-L-E, if you're interested.

And through a series of questions, the UBLE test claims to predict your chances of being alive over the next five years. So I completed the questionnaire, which asked various things about my lifestyle, my health, and apparently I have a 0.4% chance of dying in the next five years.

That's pretty good, I thought. But for all its scientific research and medical claims, I have no idea what my lifespan is.

Today might be my last day. I might have another 50 years. Who knows? So perhaps there is some truth in the title of the blog, Live Each Day As If It Were Your Very Last.

[6 : 00] Now in some sense, that's what Jesus seems to be teaching us through this text of Luke 13, 1-9.

Not because I don't know how long I'm going to live, but because when we die, we will all have an encounter with King Jesus.

Three things we're going to look at together, three big ideas that we learn from this text. The first one is this. The inescapable reality of death.

The fact is, while none of us like to talk about it, is that death is not far from any one of us. Have a look at verse 1. Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

Now we don't know the exact details of what went on, but it was clear there was a terrible act of violence. Pilate, of course, was the Roman ruler in charge and he ruled with an iron fist.

[7 : 18] Some Galileans back up in Jerusalem had gone to the temple to worship and as they went about their worship, they were massacred by Pilate for no other reason than they seemed to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Instead of animals being sacrificed, people have been slaughtered. It's what dictators do to keep power.

One minute they are going to worship God, the next their life ends violently. Now this has obviously raised some important questions for these people and they're coming to Jesus with it as if to say, why?

Why has that happened? But rather than give them a direct answer, Jesus goes on to talk about another tragedy in verse 4. He says, as if to say, haven't you heard about those 18 who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them?

Again, we don't know how it happened or what went on, but a tower which was part of the city wall had collapsed. And 18 people who happened to be in there at that time had their lives tragically cut short.

[8 : 40] One minute going about their normal day, the next their life is suddenly taken. We're faced with this reality every day in the news.

I will never forget as a young kid the day when I was watching a helicopter fly overhead and it was going to land down in the nearby hospital.

So I jumped on my bike as I always did when the helicopters came and cycled over to the hospital to watch it land. They took the person out of the hospital out of the helicopter and into the hospital.

I cycled home again, didn't think much more about it. Until later that evening we got news to hear that my friend Richard had been tragically killed and had fallen from a cliff and they had taken him to the hospital by helicopter.

That day reminded me and hit me like a ton of bricks to say my life will not last forever.

[9 : 58] Sad and tragic as that event was it suddenly awoke me as a young kid to say I am not going to live forever.

Forever. You see that's the case for all of us. Faced with sudden death we are confronted with our own mortality.

And of course when these tragic and sudden deaths come to us it raises all kinds of questions. It causes us to ask why?

Why has God allowed this to happen? why did it happen to my friend? Why so young? Why did that person get cancer?

Why did this violent act happen in the temple? Why did the tower fall? It's a natural and normal question for us to ask. But the surprise through this is that Jesus doesn't actually give an answer to that question.

[11 : 07] instead he brings us to another truth something that he wants us to all see and understand.

Because behind every death is this. Jesus says the primary reason and the cause for all death is sin.

Have a look at verse 2. Jesus answered do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way?

You see those who come to Jesus with this incident assume that their violent end means that God must be punishing them. These Galileans must have committed some terrible act or some awful sin in their life for this tragedy to happen to them.

in fact they thought that the more tragic the death the greater the sin must have been. It's almost this kind of karma-like outlook on life. You do something good you live long if you do something bad your life will be cut short.

[12 : 19] But no that's not the case says Jesus. Look at verse 3 I tell you no don't think like that. How we die is not evidence of how good or bad we are.

We may live a good and moral life and die early or we may live a bad and immoral life and live a long long time. Verse 4 what of those 18 who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them do you think that they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?

I tell you no. We are actually no better or no worse than each other. It's not how we die but the fact that we all die.

The point is death is evidence that each one of us have all sinned. The Apostle Paul put it like this in Romans 5 as he was speaking about the fall of Adam the very beginning of creation.

Therefore just as sin entered the world through one man that was Adam and death through sin and in this way death came to all people because all sinned.

[13 : 50] You see each and every one of us have all ignored and rejected Jesus as King. I may live a healthy life till I'm 90. I may be struck down with cancer tomorrow and die within a year.

But however I die and whenever that time may be the reason for my death is ultimately sin.

when we die the coroner's report may say heart failure it may say suffocation it may come up with some other reason but Jesus says I want you to look behind all of that.

The cause and the reason for all death for all people in all the world is because of our rebellion because we've turned against God we will all die.

so first the inescapable reality of death second the immediate need to repent you see we might see death as a problem it robs us of friends and family it steals away our joy but it's what follows death that is the real problem you see death is not the end we don't just die and that's it no more it leads to an encounter with God and that's what Jesus is implying through this discussion that he has with these people he's making it clear that when we die we will face the judge of all the earth regardless of who we are or how we've lived we will all have to give an account to God so instead of wondering if someone's violent or tragic death is God's special judgment on them he's saying you shouldn't think like that what you should be thinking is about how are you going to stand before God when we are judged death is not the end it brings us into an encounter with God and with that

[16 : 12] Jesus says the prospect of hell look again closely to what Jesus says in verse three they've come to him with this tragedy behind it is this question of well why would this happen and Jesus turns them and points them to something much greater that we need to consider in verse three he says I tell you no but unless you repent you too will all perish to perish is to face the terrible reality of hell which is separation from God and all that is good and beautiful it's not a threat it's an expression of God's just and fair response to all that is wrong hell exists because God cares about injustice God cares about violent crime God cares about how we treat each other and he cares about how we treat his son it's real it's not made up and it's what every one of us deserve because we've all broken

God's good gifts every one of us in this room have caused hurt to those we love the most we've all made selfish decisions that have ended close relationships we've all lived as if we were the center of the universe deciding this is what's right or this is best for me go and god can't let us and the world go on breaking and ruining our lives and the lives of each other and all the tragedy that we see around us in this world hell is god's just and fair response to sin and what he's making it clear to us is he's saying there is something much worse than dying at the hands of a violent dictator.

There is something far more terrifying than dying in a natural disaster when a tower should fall. It is the fearful prospect of an eternity in hell being separated from God.

All his good gifts and his grace and mercy. And knowing that this is the true reality Jesus pleads with us all look again at verse 3 but unless you repent you too will all perish.

He says the same again in verse 5 unless you repent you too will all perish. Now I know we talk about repentance often but we've got to be clear as to what true repentance is.

[19 : 22] Sometimes we can be remorseful but that's not repentance. Being remorseful means we regret what we've done because of the consequences to our life.

So the adulterer well they may be remorseful because they've been caught and their wife has ended up leaving them. And they go I wish I hadn't done that because of the impact on their life.

They're only sorry because they've been caught. But being repentant means we seek genuine heart change regardless of the consequences to our life.

So the one who's had the affair is repentant and they will face up to the seriousness of their actions. They will accept the consequences and seek to change their ways.

They repent because they do not want to do the same things again. Judas and Peter who were disciples of Jesus are good examples of this.

[20 : 28] You know the story of Judas and of Peter. Both of them acted in denial and betrayal. Both of them had sinned just like us. Judas. Judas well he was remorseful.

He was found out what he had done. And because he was found out he ran away and he hung himself. Because remorse leads to despair.

Peter on the other hand well he was repentant. He knew what he had done wrong too. He had been found out but he ran back to Jesus in confession. Repentance always leads to a restored and reconciled relationship with God.

So the right response Jesus says is not remorse but true repentance. Now as we work through this we may struggle with some of the things that Jesus is saying.

And we can even think that well God sounds very harsh. I don't like this God. But if we look carefully and see well he's speaking the truth and he's actually persevering with us.

[21 : 53] In fact through this as he goes on to tell a parable he cares about us intimately. He cares about us so much that he has actually delayed his judgment.

Look at verse 6. He then told this parable. A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard and he went to look for fruit on it but didn't find any.

So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard for three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down. Why should it use up the soil?

Now the point of the story is that the owner of the vineyard has been delaying his decision. He's given the fig tree every opportunity to start doing what it is meant to do.

You plant a fig tree because it's meant to produce figs. But three years he's waited which is a very long time when your livelihood depends on good harvest.

[23 : 04] So why waste the good ground with a bad tree if it's not doing anything? Get rid of it and put in a new tree. But he's waited three years.

And he's saying this is what God is like in the way in which he deals with us. You see this vineyard image of the owner and the vineyard was very often used to describe God's relationship to his people Israel.

God looked for fruit but he didn't find any. He looked for a change in the lives of the people of Israel but it didn't come. But rather than bring his judgment he waited patiently.

He longed for them to return. Listen to what God said through the prophet Ezekiel. to the people of Israel. As surely as I live declares the sovereign Lord I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked but rather that they turn from their ways and live.

Turn. Turn from your evil ways. And so it is with us. God has been delaying his judgment not just three years but for well over two thousand years.

[24 : 30] He has persevered with us. He is patient with us. He is longing that none perish but that all would come in repentance to him.

God is gracious and full of mercy persevering and long suffering. In fact judgment is not only delayed in the gospel story we discover that judgment has already fallen.

You see Jesus too would suffer. Not just these people were slaughtered but Jesus would also be slaughtered.

Cut down in the prime of his life just 33 years old when he was murdered and hung on a cross. Slaughtered at the hands of Pilate and his soldiers.

But Jesus' death was no accident. This was all planned by God from before the creation of the world. His death was the true sacrifice.

[25 : 37] Jesus died not because he was the worst of sinners. He had never sinned. But he died because he took my sin and your sin on himself.

And so as he hung on the cross the judgment of God fell not on us but on Jesus. Crushed beneath the wrath of God experiencing the reality of hell for you and for me.

God in his mercy allowed his judgment to fall on his own son rather than on us so that we could have life with him.

And so because judgment has fallen God acts in incredible mercy towards us and to this world. Look at verse 8.

Sir, the man replied, leave it alone for one more year and I'll dig round it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine.

[26 : 50] If not, then cut it down. You see, the image here is of the vineyard who goes above and beyond what we think he should do. he does all that he can, giving the tree every opportunity, fertilizing it, watering it, pruning it, whatever it may take to produce fruit.

If it takes another year, I'll give it another year. And again, that's God's dealing with us. God responds to our stubborn hearts with incredible mercy, giving us every opportunity that we would turn to God, but not just turn to God, but to change our lives, to produce fruit in keeping with a true disciple.

But please note, the offer of God's mercy is not infinite. Look at verse 9. If it bears fruit next year, fine.

If not, then cut it down. A sober warning that a time will come when God's offer of mercy will come to an end.

The time of grace will be over. And all those who have not taken refuge under the cross will face the just and fair judgment of God.

[28 : 30] God is merciful. God is gracious, long suffering and persevering, longing that all would turn to him. And this is the God that we need to tell people about.

This is the God that we need to pray to people about, that they would turn and that we would get our lives ready to meet him.

Let's pray together. and let's bear. By Acts, we will carry M together.