

JESUS ON KARMA

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] Father, we commend into your hands all who mourn the death, even today and all this week, all who mourn the death of Corporal Nathan Cirillo.

We commend them into your hands. We commend this city into your hands. We commend our nation into your hands. We ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would move in the leaders of this nation, the leaders of this city, to guide them in seeking the true good of our city and our country in the days ahead.

And, Father, we ask for us. We ask for ourselves. We ask, Father, that you help us to listen to Jesus, that you help us to listen to what he teaches, that you help us, Father, to follow him, make us disciples gripped by the gospel, living for your glory.

This we ask in Jesus' name, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. On Wednesday, a man paying homage at a national shrine died, and in a sense, his blood was shed at that national shrine.

And in a real sense, his blood was mingled with what that shrine honored, which was the shed blood of soldiers who had died in our wars. So on Wednesday, in an act that was intended to be political and to strike terror, a man paying homage died, and his blood was mingled with that place, which in some ways is a national shrine.

[1 : 45] And many of us would wonder, if we asked Jesus what he thought about it, what would he say? Believe it or not, in the gospel text, which I just read, an almost identical question was put to Jesus 2,000 years ago.

And that's really funny. I'm not smart enough to organize these things or even figure it out. I made the decision, in a sense, months ago that we would look at Luke chapter 13 today.

And in fact, I have to confess, it was only on Thursday that it hit me like a ton of bricks, but that's in fact how the text begins. So it would be a great help to me if you open your Bibles, and let's look at what happens when an almost identical question to what I posed is posed to Jesus about 2,000 years ago.

So it's Luke chapter 13, and there's always some free Bibles up here at the front. If you didn't bring a Bible of your own, or you can just listen to me, I'll read it. And let's just see how the questions formed and what it is that Jesus says.

Luke chapter 13. And if you're not that familiar with your Bibles, Luke is sort of around the, there you go, you can see where it is in my Bible, that's sort of towards the back. And here's how it goes.

[3 : 03] There were some present at that very time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Say it again.

There were some present. So Jesus is there teaching. Some people say, Jesus, did you hear what just went on? Did you hear about those Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices?

Now it's said very, very compactly, very shortly. You can easily see why at first we don't quite grasp what they've just said. But what they've said is that some people had gone from Galilee down to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices at a national shrine to pay homage.

And while they were there, Pilate killed them in the holy place, offering their sacrifices. And Pilate did it as an act of terror to quiet the population and bend them to his will.

That's why Pilate did it. Pilate did it. So Jesus, did you hear about that? Just went on in Jerusalem. Those Galileans who died paying homage under the hand of a person instilling political terror for political control.

[4 : 27] Now, this is Jesus that we're talking about. What did he say? And, you know, those of us who are Christ followers, it's one of the things that we have to wrestle with all of the time is that when we think, even when there's a really cool question, that Jesus sort of confuses us with his answers because he doesn't answer the way we expect him.

And, you know, we sort of, we've spent the week, you know, maybe you've listened to CFRA, maybe you've listened to CBC, you've watched the news, you've read the newspapers, you've gone to the blogs, you've read the, you know, follow the Twitter feeds, et cetera.

And so our whole culture and our whole mindset is going in this type of direction as the question is posed. And because everything within us is sort of going in this direction as the question is posed, we're now waiting to hear what Jesus has said, he's going to say.

And remember, we're all going in this one direction, right? So it's going to puzzle us at first. And in fact, as it starts to sink in what Jesus is saying, it's going to offend some of us.

But it's definitely going to puzzle us and confuse us. How does Jesus respond? Verse 2. And in fact, actually, his response really goes all the way through to verse 21.

[5 : 50] Verse 2. Jesus answered them, Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered in this way? We'll talk about that in a moment.

No. No. I tell you. But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or here Jesus sort of actually ups the ante and talks about another tragedy.

The first one by the hand of a man and soldiers. The next one, as the insurance agents would say it, is an act of God. That's how the insurance agents would characterize it.

Verse 4. Or those 18 on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No. I tell you.

But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. So what we see, remember, Jesus is different.

[6 : 51] Jesus could have talked about national things, political things, cultural things, religious things, military things, social things, economic things.

We're sort of programmed right now in our culture or deeply influenced our culture to move lockstep with all of these things. What do we think about Muslims? What do we think about ISIL? What do we think about security? What do we think about freedom?

What do we think about this? What do we think about that? The questions asked to Jesus, and Jesus doesn't go any of that way. By the way, he's not saying necessarily that those are questions that shouldn't be asked. It's just not the way he goes.

Jesus specifically sidesteps, intentionally sidesteps the political, cultural, economic, etc. questions, and he goes to the heart. He goes to the center of who we are.

He goes to the assumptions that are deeply embedded in the center of who we are. He goes deeply personal. It's interesting.

[7 : 51] One of the, this, you know, I don't know Greek, so what I do in preparation for the sermon is part of how I serve you and serve Jesus is by, I spend some time every week in at least one commentary that's like an academic level commentary that the Greek is known, so I can understand what's going on at the Greek level of the text.

And I also read a couple of other commentaries. And one of the commentaries that I've been reading for all of these series is a commentary written in around 1870, 1870. And the commentator who wrote in 1870, he's quoting a commentary that he thought was very wise and insightful that was written like about 150 years earlier.

That's 150 years earlier. So that's the early 1700s. And he thought that one of the things which was very insightful about this commentary, we're now talking like almost 300 years ago, right?

And he said that human beings are always more willing to talk about the death of others than their own death. And the guy writing in 1870 thought that this guy writing in 1710 was very wise and perceptive.

Some things don't change in human nature. That we're more willing to talk about the death of others than the death of ourself. So what's going on here? Well, first of all, and it's not clear whether the hearers specifically thought this about the event, but nobody here, I'm guessing, thinks that what happened to Corporal Nathan Cirillo showed that he had bad karma or was a bad sinner.

[9 : 26] Probably everybody here in this room, like most Canadians today, view him as a hero. But Jesus isn't so much talking about this particular instance as what goes on in our hearts in general.

And how many of us in our hearts in general have not, and maybe you have been very, very blessed and nothing bad has ever happened to you, but how many of us, when something bad has happened to us, some tragedy befalls us, some huge setback befalls us, ask ourselves, what have I done to deserve this?

What have I done to deserve this? How many of us worry about the question, why do bad things happen to good people? And Jesus is going at this question, that on one hand we have this deep-seated sense, oops, can't lose my glasses, that'll make it hard later, that we have this deep-seated sense that somehow there is this connection between tragedy and suffering and bad actions on our part.

And not only that, that Jesus is actually going to do something deeper here with this, because there's a flip side to this question. And the flip side is a presumption, an assumption, that when things are going well, when we're blessed beyond belief, that somehow I deserve it.

I deserve it. Andrew, if you could put up the first point. Here's what Jesus is saying. I'll still unpack it a little bit for us. When Jesus cuts the connection between sin and tragedy, he also undermines the assumption that good things are mine because I deserve them, and they are owed to me.

[11 : 18] When Jesus cuts the connection between sin and tragedy, he also undermines the assumption that good things are mine because I deserve them, and they are owed to me. We Canadians have a deep-seated belief.

It's so deep that we rarely examine it, that somehow Canada is owed prosperity, safety, and security. We don't believe in the divine right of kings, but we do unconsciously believe in the divine right of being Canadians.

And here's the thing. There's some immigrants in the room. The majority of us were born in this country. One of the things that struck me, a year ago today I was in Nairobi, and you have unbelievable poverty in Nairobi.

And you know what? I didn't do anything to organize being born in Canada. I could have been born in Nairobi. I could have been born to that woman that I saw on the street with a little baby that didn't seem to be able to see and was missing limbs.

I could have been that child. I didn't do anything to deserve being born in Canada. And we Canadians have a deep-seated, it's so deep-seated that it's rarely discussed, a deep-seated complacency and assumption and presumption that somehow or another, it doesn't matter how good or bad politicians are, how good or bad teachers are, how good or bad business people are, that somehow our prosperity is, it doesn't matter what the union deal is like or that the owner is like, that somehow we are owed prosperity, plenty, safety.

[13:06] And in a sense, when bad things happen in other parts of the world, it's because in some way they deserve it. They deserve it because of tribalism. They deserve it because of the way they treat women. They deserve it because of their corruption.

They deserve it. And at a very, very deep level, we, at our hearts, believe that there's a connection between tragedy and sin and those of us who are healthy and prosperous.

It's not just, it's owed us. We have a divine right to it. And Jesus, rather than following the national political drift, he attacks the heart, the center of who I am, the assumptions underneath how I think.

And it's very, very shocking. In fact, it even gets worse. It gets worse. Because what does Jesus say again?

Do you think that those Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. And some of us might wonder, why is Jesus being so mean?

[14:17] Why is he being so negative and depressing? I come to church for a moment of quiet and inspiration. And frankly, having Jesus tell me that I should feel lousy about myself?

George, no wonder the church in Canada is shrinking. Well, let's make the matters worse. Because actually what Jesus is saying is, see, the average Canadian, if we were to go out after the service and we were just to start talking to people downtown, or maybe you think, oh, maybe downtown people are different, go to Canada, go to Orleans, and just maybe talk at the coffee shops and the soccer fields and other places.

You might not see too many people out today because it's the weather's Ottawa weather and therefore in November, October, not very good. And the average Canadian, if you said if you were just to die in 10 minutes, what's going to happen to you?

10 minutes, you're going to die. What's going to happen to you? And most Canadians would say one of two things. I just cease to exist or I go to a better place.

That's what most Canadians would say. And so at a very, very deeply level of the heart, in a sense, we would say that if there is some type of God that does exist and as if there's a final exam that's needed to get into heaven, some of us, most of us, because we're Canadian, very few of us, I mean, inwardly, we might think we're worth at least an A, but we'd probably, because we're Canadians, not say that we'd get an A, but we'd probably say we got a B or a B minus, and maybe a couple of us have been a bit depressed, and we might say, well, you know, right now I think I might be getting a D minus, but if I could just live another four months, I'll get my mark up to a B.

[16:11] But Jesus says that apart from him, I'm going to sort of get to that, but Jesus is saying that in and of ourselves, and he's saying this to George, and he's saying this to each of us, that we stand before God with an F, and that if he gives us four more months, F, gives us 40 years, F.

In fact, if you could put this up, Andrew, the Bible later on captures what Jesus is saying here in Luke 13 and puts it in a very pithy way, which is this, the Bible captures the message of Jesus, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. That's what Jesus means when he says twice, no, I tell you, unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. So what on earth is going on here?

What on earth is going on? Jesus continues to sort of burrow into the heart. He continues to burrow into the heart by the very, very next story that he tells.

And at first glance, he actually makes it worse. For us Canadians, with our assumption of our mark and our assumption that our prosperity is somehow a divine right, and we come to church listening to all of the commentary of our neighborhoods and the papers in the media, and we hope that maybe Jesus starts to qualify this in a helpful way.

[17 : 49] He's going to in a moment, but first he actually continues to burrow deeper into our heart, to go even deeper, even if we understand this idea of more work, that somehow or another, how that relates to God.

And he does it in the very next parable, verse six. And Jesus told the parable, a man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it, and he found none.

And the owner of the vineyard said to the vine dresser, look, for three years now, I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground? And the vine dresser answered him, sir, let it alone this year also.

Let it alone until I dig around it, loosen the soil, put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good. But if not, you can cut it down. And this actually sounds like a little bit worse.

I was just talking to somebody a week or two ago, and they talked about a person who they just discovered had used to be very deeply involved in Christianity. And he just read a speech by her, a talk by her, and she's now become a very anti-Christian.

[18 : 59] And one of the things that she does is she just documents time and time and time again how Jesus and the God of the Bible are abusive. And at first glance, what Jesus says would be prime evidence that God is an abusive God.

Why do I say that? If we were to come across a dad or a mom, and they have kids in grade one through high school, and the mom and the dad, if the kids don't get A's, are mad and angry at them, we would say that's abusive.

If one of us came and said that we grew up in a family where unless we got A's, our moms and dads would be mad at us, not give us attention, we would say, yeah, you need counseling and therapy because your parents were abusive.

Is that what Jesus is saying here? You know, look at this. You know, the parable is about, look at this, this fig tree. It's not fruitful. It's not doing particularly well. You know, I've given it all sorts of attention.

Just cut it down and get rid of it. Just cut it down. Just cut it down. Is this Jesus saying that God is expecting us that the problem is, in my mind, if I had to die in 10 minutes, and I appear before God, and I've worked out an A in my life that I didn't realize that God has way higher standards than that, and so I'm actually got an F, and, you know, frankly, many of us would say, like, I don't know what his standards are.

[20 : 35] Like, that seems a little bit unjust and cruel, and why doesn't he give me a break? Like, my teacher gives me a break. Like, my mom gives me a break. Like, why doesn't God give me a break? Why doesn't Jesus give me a break?

Isn't that like an abusive type of way of relating to us? Isn't Jesus' teaching abusive? And that's how we can hear it. See, what Jesus is doing is he's deepening in at our heart if we just let him listen.

Here's a thing for us to say before we read the very next thing. If there's one thing that you get out of the sermon today, part of it would have to be this. Jesus says all of these things on his way to Jerusalem to die.

And every time that Jesus talks about one of these things on his way to Jerusalem to die, one of the people who's listening is Judas, who will betray him. That, in fact, not only does Jesus show extraordinary patience and compassion to Judas, who he knows will betray him, not only does he have, in a sense, a deep hope, that that will not be Judas' fate, that Jesus is going to Jerusalem to die.

Here's the thing, if you could put it up, Andrew. At the deepest, truest level possible, Jesus is for you. His same shock, they're not what we expect, and at first glance, because they offend our pride, and for many of us, my pride is myself.

[22 : 17] When he offends my pride, he offends me. But on one hand, Jesus is warning us of on one hand, the dire straits that we're in. On the other hand, he's letting us begin to understand that we are more wildly, deeply, unbelievably, unimaginably loved.

Because Jesus is for you. And nothing he says can be understood if you don't understand that he is for you, and will die for you, and will endure the equivalent of hell for you, and for me.

So how does Jesus begin to turn the corner? He does it with a miracle. And everything in the miracle is significant. Verse 10.

Now Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. He's up there teaching. Sort of imagine this sitting here. The ruler of the synagogue is, I don't want to point where anybody's sitting.

The ruler of the synagogue is sitting right here. This was like an Anglican church. The bishop's throne is right here. Okay? And the ruler of the synagogue is on the bishop's throne.

[23 : 38] Jesus is up here teaching. And so Jesus was teaching one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And there was a woman who had a disabling spirit. I'm not going to talk much about it today, but yes, this text is saying that demons can affect us physically.

That demons exist and they can affect us physically. And what's going to happen is both an exorcism and a miracle of healing at the same time. But I'm not going to actually talk about this much because it's, we'll talk about some of this stuff in a couple of weeks.

So, there was a woman who had a disabling spirit for 18 years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, woman, you are freed from your disability.

And Jesus laid his hands on her and immediately she was made straight and she glorified God. but the ruler of the synagogue, deeply indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, there are six days in which work ought to be done.

Come on those days and be healed and not on the Sabbath day. So, just so you understand, so Jesus is teaching and in the original language, they use a, and in fact, in some of the academic and other commentaries, they talk about what the medical condition could be.

[24 : 53] But what you can imagine is that Jesus is up here teaching and maybe, and a woman comes in and this is how she is. And for 18 years, this is how she's lived her life.

She sleeps like this. She somehow sits like this. She walks like this. She washes herself like this. She dresses herself like this. She has conversations with people like this.

And this has not been how she was born. But for 18 years, this is how she lives. And she would be known to the synagogue because when you live like this for 18 years, you don't go on long trips.

She's a local. And Jesus sees her. He says what he's going to do. He puts his hand on her.

He calls her up. So we wouldn't be on a stage. It'd be all one level. And he puts his hand on her back or her head. It doesn't say where, but he puts his hand on her. Makes it very, very clear this isn't just going to be a coincidence.

[26 : 11] And he just says, you're free, which means now the demon has been cast out. And whatever physiological problems there is in that person's body, after 18 years of this, it's an unbelievable miracle of destruction and creation and unbelievable health.

And she goes from this to going like this. And the first thing that bursts from her mouth is praising God. The first thing that comes out, praise you, God.

The ruler of the synagogue is sitting in the bishop's chair. Sorry, Charlie. That's my bishop. He wouldn't do it. Okay. But George is sitting here in the bishop's chair.

This is a guest speaker who's come in. And George gets up. And this is how it goes in the text. And he'd stand in front of Jesus. He doesn't talk to Jesus. He has his back to Jesus.

He talks to the congregation. He says, okay, folks, I want you to understand what's just happened. What this guest speaker did is wrong. We all know how important the Sabbath is.

[27 : 18] We all know how central it is to our identity. And we all know that on the Sabbath you don't work. And this guy, he just worked in front of all of us.

It's an unbelievable offense that he would do this. You know what? Old Irma, or whatever her name is, he could have healed her yesterday. He could heal her tomorrow.

He could have worked any day of the week. He did this on purpose. It's deeply offensive. It's work. You've got to understand that what he just did was wrong. That's what happens.

And the man doesn't say it to Jesus. He, in a sense, puts himself between Jesus and the congregation. He addresses the people. Now, we've already seen that Jesus is very surprising.

And he obviously hasn't read the book Getting to Yes. And he hasn't read Dale Carnegie's How to Win Friends and Influence People. And somehow, he's missed all of that literature.

[28 : 14] And how does Jesus respond? He says, verse 15, You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it?

And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan bound for 18 years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day? On the Sabbath day.

So, what's going on here in this particular story?

The first thing is, and this has really been striking, this is the first time I've said anything about it this fall, but it's really struck me this fall, reading the gospel, that one of the perceptions that people outside of churches have about Christians is that Christians spend their time railing at the ungodly.

Okay? And if you're in a more left-wing church, you rail against the ungodly conservatives, the ungodly capitalists, the ungodly business leaders, and you rail against them.

[29 : 23] And if you're in a more right-wing evangelical church, you rail against those homosexuals, and you rail against the bars, and you rail against those businesses open on Sunday, and you rail against those people cheating on their husbands and their wives, and you rail against them.

And the perception outside is that Jesus and Christians, and therefore must be Jesus, are always railing at people who are outside of the church. You know the thing which is really striking if you read the Gospels?

It's really, it's the first time. I've almost said it every week. Jesus virtually never talks about those people. He spends his time going after religious and spiritual types primarily.

Like right now. Jesus doesn't get up to the synagogue leader and say, let me tell you about those homosexuals and people who own bars, or let me tell you about those Harper conservatives and their agenda.

Okay? I want to get back in your good books, folks. This is a left-wing congregation. Those Harperites, people from Alberta, you know, or if it's a right-wing type of synagogue, he says, yeah, yeah, those gays, those, boy, am I ever angry at them.

[30 : 43] Jesus goes after the ruler of the synagogue. He goes after the guy in the bishop's seat. And in fact, in the gospels, Jesus spends vastly more time critiquing the religious and the spiritual.

One of the other things he does, by the way, and this is the shocking thing, another sermon, is that we're all religious and we're all spiritual because we all worship and we all follow idols.

But that's a separate sermon. Just throw that in. Here's the thing. Some of us might say, okay, well, you know, we would never do that. But, okay, now I'm going to maybe offend some people.

G.K. Chesterton, go ahead, yeah, G.K. Chesterton famously said that Christians believe in miracles because of evidence and secularists don't believe in miracles because of dogma.

Chesterton was famous for shocking inversion statements like that. Many people will say, oh, yeah, you believe in the Bible and the miracles and all because of dogma. Well, Chesterton says, Christians believe in miracles because of evidence.

[31 : 52] Seculars don't believe in miracles because of dogma. So, how do we extend this beyond? On one hand, it's a critique of the religious guy, but you know what, for a second, it's a critique of us for a second.

Like, why are some of us bothered by this for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God? Why is it? Because we want to stand in front of Jesus and say, true religion tells us we're good.

This guy has just done something wrong. True religion tells us that we're good. Where we stand in front, true religion doesn't talk about demons.

Where we step in front and we say, true religion is mystical. Where we step in front and say, true religion doesn't have any miracles in it. Where we step in front and we say, true religion is equally open to every human being.

Where we step in front of Jesus and we say, whatever. We step in front of Jesus and tell him off.

[32 : 57] He's addressing a human problem. He's addressing the problems in our culture where we have expectations of what it is that Jesus will be like and the gospel will be like and the good news will be like.

And when it doesn't fit our criteria, our rules, we tell Jesus he's wrong. Here's the thing that the other, that the thing is now trying to get us to see if we're now willing to listen.

If you could put it up, Andrew. We know that Jesus Christ crucified is the power from God. Not that, as if it's impersonal, but Jesus Christ is the power from God who, this, who frees us, heals us, makes us stand upright, and releases praise from God.

Praise for God from us. That's what it should say. Releases praise for God from us. That's, okay, how did it begin?

Unless you also likewise repent, you will likewise perish for all of sin and fall short of the glory of God. This idea that somehow our prosperity is due to us, this idea somehow that our fruitfulness and what we accomplish will somehow equate with salvation or guarantees our salvation, and Jesus is wanting to say that George, even if you live to be 107 and you're an unbelievably good man in the eyes of the world, it will still add up to enough.

- [34 : 38] What the Bible is trying to get us to understand is that we are separate, apart from God, and that we cannot fix that ourselves, and that what God does in the person of Jesus is that Jesus, as he dies upon the cross, is a power of God, a power that comes from God that does what we cannot do, and it's offered for us.

And what does that power do? It frees me. It delivers me from demonic bondage. It delivers me into health and wholeness.

It causes me to no longer be fallen and bent, but to stand upright and releases from me praise. And that's what Jesus does. It's a visible enacting of what it will be, what he accomplishes for us on the cross.

He's walking to Jerusalem, and what he will accomplish for us on the cross is visibly enacted in front of the eyes of the congregation. The woman does nothing.

The woman is helpless. The woman cannot change herself. Jesus grants her freedom. Jesus destroys the things within her that would keep her bound even after the demon is out.

- [35 : 51] Jesus creates within her new bones and new sinews and new tendons. Jesus does all of this purely by his power.

The woman adds nothing and that power of God coming upon her releases praise. Remember what I say almost every week from Spurgeon.

The Christian faith is one beggar telling another beggar where to find free bread. Jesus Christ crucified is the power from God who frees us, heals us, makes us stand upright and releases praise for God from us when we receive it.

Let's just sort of wrap it up over the next couple of minutes to sort of try to put some of these other pieces in the passage together. What's going on about that fruit tree? Here's what's going on. If you could put it up Andrew, fruitfulness follows conversion.

Fruitfulness does not create conversion or equate with conversion. Faithfulness comes from receiving the gospel, first receiving the gospel and then being gripped by the gospel.

- [37 : 13] See, the common human problem is I want my good acts or the fact that I'm Canadian and therefore I don't have to do as many good acts because I'm Canadian. You know, I'm a, you know, you can fill in the blank.

I'm a gay Canadian, I don't have to do as many good acts. I'm a heterosexual Canadian, I don't have to do as many good acts. I'm a rich Canadian, I don't have to do as many good acts. I'm a victimized Canadian, therefore I don't have to do as many good acts. I'm a Canada Canadian. I don't have to do as many good acts. I'm an urban people, not one of those suburban people. Therefore, I don't have to do as many good acts. But I do my good acts. And therefore, somehow or another, that is salvation that creates salvation.

And it's deeply ingrained in us. The gospel is constantly trying to bang that out of our heart to help us to understand that first we receive the gospel and then we are gripped by the gospel.

And that's what fruitfulness comes from, that fruitfulness follows conversion. Fruitfulness does not create conversion or equate with conversion. That's what all of Jesus' teaching is trying to get our hearts to the point of realizing what's going on and how we're keeping God distant and our pride and our arrogance and our presumption and our need for Jesus to come empty-handed.

And the other thing that the text says, well, we have to read the last few verses. If you go back to Luke 13, hopefully you haven't closed it. Verse 17, as Jesus said, these things, all his adversaries were put to shame and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

[38 : 53] Jesus said, therefore, what is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? See, the kingdom of God is where the king is to rule, to save and to rule. Jesus is the king.

Verse 19, it is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden and it grew and became a tree and the birds of the air made nests in its branches. And again, he said, to what shall I compare the kingdom of God? It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour until it was all leavened. Two quick takeaways from that. First one, Jesus starts small, but he will take and shape all. Jesus starts small. That's the parable of the leaven. It seems like a very, very small thing. In 1972 in November, for the first real time, I bowed my knees and asked Jesus to come into my life, to be my savior and my Lord. November 5th, 1972, probably about two miles from here in terms of geography. And I didn't have lightning flashes or mystical experience. It started very small.

And there's a long way to go in my life. Ask my wife and my kids and those who work for me. I am not perfect. But it starts small and Jesus will take all. My sexuality, my money, my body, my mind, my time, my plans, my memories, my talents, my fears, my brokenness, my wounds, my strengths, my sins. He will take all.

And in the parable of the mustard seed, Jesus starts small. One guy dying on a cross in an obscure corner of the Roman Empire, attended by a couple of women and a young guy named John. And three days later, a woman named Mary, he's Jesus for the first time after his death and resurrection.

And then a handful of people, maybe if he added them all up, about 600 in an obscure corner of the Roman Empire. Jesus starts small, but his new covenant will encompass all.

[41 : 33] It encompasses life. It encompasses economics and politics and family structure. It encompasses all. It's big. It's not just something private and spiritual.

It's big. It's big. Which leads us to our end. See, Jesus dying upon the cross, and this miracle, what it shows us, the Christian life begins when we say to Jesus, Jesus, what you've just done for that woman.

I am that woman bent over. I am that woman bound. And, you know, it's as simple as saying, what you did for her.

Could you do it for me? And never let me go. That's how the Christian life begins. I can tell you more fancy prayers, but it's just as simple as that. If you just say to Jesus in your heart, Luke 13 right here, in my heart.

I don't have that fancy theological language. Luke 13 in here. And for those of us who do that, as we think about what Jesus does for us on the cross, it pushes us into things that we never thought we'd do.

[42 : 52] I had terrible acne. I had terrible acne, and I was shy, and I started leading Bible studies in my high school. Skinny, acne-scarred, shy, leading Bible studies in a high school.

gospel. The gospel pushes us into things because when Jesus takes us, he never lets us go. As we think about the cross, it pulls us into things that we never thought we'd do.

As we think about the gospel, it shapes us in ways that we never thought we'd be shaped. And because he really did die and he really did rise, it grounds us in doing things that we never thought we could do.

So, for those of us who are Christ followers today, how do we live after Wednesday? I talk a little bit about it in the blog that you could look at, but here's how Jesus invites us to live in Ottawa after Wednesday.

If you're engaged, get married. If you're married and God grants you this ability, have children, have a family, write songs, start businesses, do your job well, pray for the peace of the city, pray for wisdom for our political leaders.

[44 : 09] If you work on Parliament Hill, read Romans 1, Romans 12, 1 and 2 every day and pray that you give godly advice to those who you serve. Seek the prosperity and the blessing of the city.

Seek to be fruitful. Seek to live as followers of Jesus without fear. Knowing that your citizenship is ultimately and finally in heaven and nothing can shake you from that.

And tell people about Jesus. And if you are here today and you've not yet said, I am that woman, there's no better time than right now to do it.

Please stand. You know, for many of us, even though we've given our lives to Jesus, the devil starts to bend us over as we get caught up with the assumptions of the world.

Should we be angry? What we should do? It just shapes us. And so, you know, some of us have to say, Jesus, you did that for me before and I'm starting to get bent over again.

[45 : 28] I know you've never let me go. I'm not asking this because I need to be your child. But boy, I really need to be gripped with the gospel so I stand upright like that woman and praise you. I stand upright with my money and with my family and my job.

And so for many of us, we just have to say to Jesus, like the ones here who say it for the first time, Jesus, this woman is me. Be my savior and my Lord and do in her what you've done with me and never let me go.

Just say it to Jesus. And for all of us, I'll just close in prayer. Father, pour out your Holy Spirit gently but deeply upon us. Gently but deeply upon us. We thank you so much, Father, that there's not a single person here, even the holiest, who was not, in a sense, by their very nature, that woman bent over, bound and not free.

We thank you so much that you died upon the cross for us, Jesus, that your death upon the cross is a power of God for salvation and that, Father, when your Son comes into our lives as Savior and Lord, that he causes us to stand upright, that he causes us to be, he brings to us freedom, he brings to us health, he brings to us wholeness, he brings to us praising of you.

Father, please help us to be disciples following Jesus, gripped by the gospel, living fruitful lives as we're gripped by the gospel, but all of our fruitful lives, Father, for your glory, for your glory, for your glory.

[46 : 57] Father, this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.