

Harvest Festival

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Date: 04 March 2001

Preacher: Jacob Kwashi

- [0 : 00] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 4th of March 2001.
- The preacher is Jacob Kawashi. He is preaching at our harvest festival service and he's from Luke chapter 13 verses 6 to 9.
- Please be seated. I count it a great privilege and a wonderful opportunity thanking God for giving me this very time to be tithing as the speaker this great harvest festival.
- And I also want to thank God specifically for the opportunity given to me to minister under the leadership of Paul, the vicar of this church.
- And I sincerely thank God for the entire congregation. I can remember today is one month when I walked into this place. And the very first day I walked into this very place, I was welcomed by all.
- [1 : 23] And you made me feel at home. Anytime I'm here, I really relax and feel at home. And thank you all for that great opportunity.
- And I want to also thank God because I'm not like Paul. What I mean by I'm not like Paul is that I'm a slow speaker.
- Paul is in the position of speaking faster than me. And if Paul can take 20-25 minutes to be here as a fast speaker, I think if I take 40 minutes I will not be crucified.
- Shall we pray? Father, we give you thanks for the gift of this day. I have a thanksgiving. We thank you for the gift of life.
- As we look into your word, we ask that you speak to us. And help us to understand you. To be able to do your will. This we ask in Jesus' name.
- [2 : 32] Amen. I would like to spend some time with us as we look at the parable of the fig tree which is found in the second reading read to us.
- Luke chapter 13 on page 848 of the Bible. I would like to start by trying to find out what brought about this parable.
- And the first thing that made Jesus to speak this parable out is what happened in verse 1-5 of this very chapter, chapter 13.
- In verse 1-5 we are told that those who were there with Jesus told him about what happened to some Galileans that Pilate killed them and mixed their blood with the sacrifices they were making.
- And also Jesus told about the tower of Ceylon that fell on some people from Jerusalem. And the understanding of the people who told Jesus Christ these two events was that they thought these people who had this thing came upon them because they were worst sinners.
- [3 : 52] And that made Jesus to tell this parable to let them know that it is not a matter of being worst sinner. It is a matter of either repent or the same thing that happened to this set of people whom you've just told me about could happen as well to you.

And then he told them the parable of the fig tree in verse 6 down to verse 9. May I say that I am aware that seated here are some theologians and they would like me to talk like a theologian and to as well look at things that the parable has it to point out clearly.

For instance it is accepted that theologians say that this parable refers to the Israelites. That is true. I am not arguing that.

And they also say that the three years mentioned here that the master came looking for fruit refers to the three years of the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth. Fine.

I am not arguing that. That is true. But I want us to take another dimension entirely as we look at this parable. We are going to look at it literally just the way it is.

[5 : 14] And we will study it just the way it is because I believe it is a parable that is of use to us based on the fact that we have faith in Jesus Christ. And I believe it is a challenge for those who have faith in Jesus Christ.

And it is my prayer that as we consider the topic planted to produce fruit. That is what we are going to look today at. Planted to produce fruit.

Good. Typically back in Nigeria when we say something like that in order to make it stick in the minds of people we ask people who are sitting in the congregation say to your neighbor planted to produce fruit.

Say to somebody are you afraid? Whisper it to somebody sitting next to you planted to produce fruit. Good.

I remembered one event that happened between me and my son Amos.

[6 : 19] He's so much loved mango. If you want Amos to do anything for you just tell him this is mango for you and he will do it for you. So when he was about three and a half years old I visited a family and at their own garden there was these mango trees sitting up and the family said to me this mango tree is very good.

We would like you to have one to replant it in your backyard. And I said fine. And I rooted one from that family from the backyard of that family and I took it home. On reaching home because I know who Amos is he likes so much I called Amos I said look we've gotten a mango tree we're going to plant this mango tree in our own backyard and this mango tree will grow up and produce mangoes upon mangoes for you to be able to take.

So excited was he he followed me to the backyard and we planted that tree. It was late and we went back our normal duties and we all went to bed and slept.

I woke up early enough and I was doing some things in the sitting room. I think about three or four hours later Amos walked up and he walked straight to the backyard.

I did not know. He just came back from the backyard and he was looking for me. He met me in the sitting room and when he came I could see right in his eyes tears already about to come out.

[7 : 57] And then I say Amos has refused to produce fruit. I said Amos what are you talking about?

We just planted that mango tree yesterday. You are expecting me to start producing fruit today? I said sit down. Then I sat him down. And I gave him some wrong information.

Because when I sat him down I told him I said look you need to understand one thing. We need to put water and always put water for this mango tree. So that the water will make the mango tree to grow faster and then it will produce enough mangoes for you.

When I said that to him I could see a kind of joy in his face. He was happy. And then he left me there in the sitting room and ran away.

One and a half hour later I went looking for Amos. Where is Amos I found him in the backyard. This time I found him soaked in water and the mango tree we planted yesterday was lying flat on the ground.

[9 : 14] I said Amos what happened? He said I was pouring water upon water so that the mango tree should grow fast and produce mango for me.

I looked at him and I smiled I said young man you have a long way to go. Brothers and sisters I want to believe that there is no any farmer here seated that would like to go into farming or to plant something without the desire of harvesting something out of that at the end of the year.

I don't want to believe that. I don't want to believe that there is I in verse 6 Jesus now said there happened to be a certain man who had a fig tree and he planted in a vineyard.

He planted this fig tree in a specific place in a vineyard. And I want to believe that in a vineyard is a place whereby there are other trees and it is possible that there are so many other trees in a vineyard where this fig tree was planted.

Therefore this fig tree cannot complain of loneliness. Right? There are other trees there to keep its company. And because this fig tree was planted in the vineyard and the fig tree met other trees there.

[11 : 16] There must be other trees that were older than it there. So this fig tree met other trees there. I believe that these trees do not complain of not learning from other trees that were there.

And I also believe that this fig tree haven't met other trees there. He should not complain of being not encouraged at all. He should be encouraged by the presence of other trees that were there.

And apart from that, a vineyard is a place whereby I believe there is a kind of security, proper protection given to it. To the extent that all the trees in the vineyard are free from the rich of the children who will come and temper with everything.

They are free from the rich of the animals who like to enter and spoil things. And I believe also that all the trees in the vineyard are free from the rich of the passerbys who like to temper with the trees and the fruits.

So this fig tree is killed. Was put in a place whereby it's totally killed. Protected. But one of the most important things that I so much cherish about this vineyard is that this fig tree was planted in a vineyard that belonged to someone.

[12 : 41] Look at the Bible. It says that the man planted the fig tree in his vineyard. His own vineyard. vineyard. And I believe strongly that that fig tree was meant only to be for that man because that vineyard belongs to him.

But the man did not stop there. If he looked closely at verse 7, how do we know that he employs someone to walk there? He came complaining to that man in verse 7.

So this reveals to us that he did not only do these three things that I've mentioned but he went to the extent of employing a worker to walk in this vineyard, a gardener to take care of the trees to make sure that the trees are given enough time, they are given proper care to make sure that the trees receive enough water and fertilizer, to make sure that the trees also receive every attention that is needed so that they will be able to produce fruits.

It is proper to say then that the trees were all given equal special attention. Everything that was needed, the owner of the vineyard provided it.

Everything was supplied from A to Z. Everything was there. Therefore, not any single tree has a reason not to produce fruit.

[14 : 20] No tree at all. And if we look at verse 6, he connected it with verse 7 by telling the gardener, he said, look, for three years I have come this way looking for fruit.

I could imagine how painful that man was. The burden of coming to the garden alone for three years is another thing.

The patient for waiting for that long is another thing. But may I say that this man did not only wait for three years. Thank God he waited for a longer period, not like Amos who waited for one day and expected mangoes on the mango tree.

But this man, he waited for three years for the fig tree to mature because it is traditionally said that it takes three years for a fig tree to mature. but he did not stop there.

He now waited for another three years patiently looking for fruit from this fig tree. In another word, he waited for about six years or more.

[15 : 28] And he complained to the gardener that for these three years, I came looking for fruit from this fig tree and I found nothing. maybe we must ask the reason why was he so specific about the fig tree.

I believe strongly that he was specific about the fig tree because all the trees who were there, they were already producing fruits. He could virtually see fruits on all other trees.

It is only this fig tree that he came looking for three years and he did not see any fruit. fruit. And what did he say? He said, look, for these three years I have come looking for fruit.

I did not see anything. Cut it down. Cut it down. I wish sometimes God would behave like a man.

That he would come and stand in a church and on every harvest Thanksgiving day he would stand there and look at everything that everybody will bring.

[16 : 38] And he would say, you, for this one year that I gave you life, what did you do with that one year? And I could hear a still voice coming out of the judgment that the owner of the vineyard passed.

Cut it down. I could hear the gardener saying, why master, why should we cut it down? I'm just imagining. And I could hear the master saying back to him, certainly it must be cut down because the tree has no reason for not producing fruit.

The tree cannot complain that the soil is not good or the environment is not good. Why? Because other trees who are there, who are participating from the same soil and participating from the same environment, they have been producing fruits.

And I believe also the master is saying certainly the tree cannot complain of water or fertilizer because all other trees who were there were given the same amount of water and fertilizer and look at them producing fruit.

Only this fig tree has refused to. And I could also hear and imagine the master saying to the gardener certainly I believe it's not your fault.

[18 : 05] I believe you've been working very well. That is why all of the trees are producing. But for this fig tree I am certain that nothing must be done to eat than to cut it down.

And his reason is that he has waited for long. I could just see the real message coming out from this parable to all of us.

That you and I are planted in the vineyard of the living God. That being born again is a grace of God upon our lives.

That becoming Christian is not because of your good works but because of the grace of God upon our lives. And God has made you and I Christians.

But that is not the end of the journey. For a fig tree to be planted in a vineyard is not the end of the journey. It has been planted so that it should produce fruit.

[19 : 10] harvest. And I could hear some of the judgment God may pass this day as we celebrate harvest on some Christians maybe here or somewhere else.

That for the past three years now Jacob has been claiming to be a Christian but I have not seen any fruit in him. For the past seven years now for the past ten years now that man there he has been saying he is a Christian but I have not seen any fruit in him.

And if the master will say cut him down that will be too bad. But that is what the master said here. Cut it down. Thank God the gardener was there.

The reason why the master said it must be cut down is the fact that the master said why should the tree be wasting the soil. If a Christian is not growing and producing fruit to the glory of God in another word from this parable that Christian is wasting every resources that God has deposited on him or on her.

So why should he be wasting resources? Cut it down. To that man land is precious. Very very precious. To the extent that unfruitful tree must give way for any tree that will be fruitful.

[20 : 38] this world that we are living in and this life that God has given unto us is a precious life. Very precious in the sight of God that you must be fruitful.

And if you felt to be fruitful, too bad. If I felt to be fruitful, too bad. Cut it down was the final judgment. But thank God the gardener said, look master, I want to plea for this one thing.

And what did he say? He said, leave this tree alone for another one year. And I could hear the master say, why should I leave it for another one year? And then the gardener said, because I want to dig around the tree.

I want to apply more of fertilizer on it. I want to give this tree close attention, more consideration, more attention, more than other trees.

fruit. And thank God, the master accepted that request or granted that request. And he said to the gardener, go ahead.

[21 : 44] And I could see Jesus in that picture when God is angry with Jacob that this one year has come and passed and Jacob cannot present any single soul for me.

This one year has come and passed and Jacob has no single fruit. I decided he should be cut down. I could hear Jesus pleading on my behalf. Father, just give him another one year.

And the gardener said, leave it alone. Let me do my work. And the owner said, fine, go ahead and do your work. I could imagine the gardener went back to that fig tree.

And I could imagine the gardener whispering, talking to fig tree. Because those who deal with flowers, I've been asked and I've been told that flowers do listen and hear words.

Those who take care of flowers, they do speak to flowers. And the flowers listen and do hear. That's good. And I believe also that this man went back to the tree and he now started talking to that tree.

[22 : 54] Saying to the tree, the time is short. You have only but one last chance to put things right. It is left for you before the judgment comes.

I could hear the gardener saying to the tree, oh, what is wrong with you? Look over there, that is a mango tree. See the type of fruit on that mango tree.

Look over there, that is the orange tree. Look over there, that is the guava tree. Look over there, that is the apple tree. tree, they all have fruit on them. They all have fruit on them.

If only you, you this very fake tree, you don't have anything to show as you walk. I don't know how many years you've been as a Christian.

What have you to show as a fruit? I don't know how many years you've celebrated harvest Thanksgiving. What have you to show? And I could virtually hear the gardener saying to that same tree, you saw the master when he walked into the villa this morning, didn't you?

[23 : 58] You saw how angry he was with you. And you heard what he said to me, that I should cut you down. I pleaded on your behalf, and he said I should leave you for another one year.

And I could virtually hear the gardener while he was digging around the tree, saying to the tree, now I'm suffering the more for you. I'm digging around you, so that I will apply fertilizer, more water, giving you more time.

Master is angry with you, and you must do something for yourself. Today you must make a choice. And I could hear the gardener saying to the tree, the master has given you the gift of another year of life as an act of his mercy, not because you deserve it, but because of his mercy, he's giving you another year, and an act of his mercy.

you must use it well. You must do something positive. And in verse 9, he concluded, he said to the tree and to the master as well, fine, after I finish my job, if you produce fruit good and well, but if you fail to produce fruit too bad, the master will cut you down.

On a harvest like this, brothers and sisters, I would like to challenge us to know that in every given situation where you find yourself, God has placed you there for a purpose.

[25 : 27] You could be a student who is a Christian in a university somewhere, God has placed you in that school for a purpose. You could be a businessman working somewhere, God has placed you there for a purpose.

Or maybe you work in an office, God has placed you in that office for a purpose. or maybe you live in a community somewhere, you have neighbors around you, God has placed you in that neighborhood for a purpose.

All that God is saying is that let people around you see the glory of Jesus Christ in your life. Let your life testify for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and his resurrection.

Let your life testify to the extent that many people will come to know the saving grace that is found in Jesus Christ. I believe strongly God like the vineyard man.

He also believed in having fruit on the trees. He goes about looking for fruit on every believer. Every one year he would go around and see how many believers have produced fruit for me.

[26 : 35] And may I say that nobody would have accused that fig tree if to say the fig tree was not planted in that man's vineyard. right. Nobody. If you say the fig tree was on its own somewhere nobody would accuse it for not producing fruit.

But because the fig tree was planted in someone's vineyard and every label and every material and resources were kind of spent on that fig tree everybody expected that fig tree to produce fruit.

If to say you say you're not going to heaven nobody would bother you and disturb you with what we're saying today. But because you desire to go to heaven because you've met Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior that means that you are a fig tree in a vineyard that must produce fruit.

And especially on harvest day like this. So the parable of the fig tree invites us to consider every year as a gift of God's mercy upon our lives.

Harvest day like this as we come with every wonderful things. You see one thing is that all that is placed here came from the ground. All.

[27 : 50] Whether it is in a tin or it is in a pack. They all came from the ground. But may I remind us that there is another greater harvest which is coming.

And the harvest of our Lord Jesus Christ which is found in Revelation chapter 14 verse 14 to 16 whereby at that time the whole world will be harvested.

All of us will stand before the Lord like priests and begin to give accounts of how fruitful we were.

May I ask this question? What would you do if you have only a year to live? Only a short time in which to make up the wrongs done and opportunities missed.

How important that year must be. Very important. I want to challenge you from the background from where I came from.

[28 : 54] Those of us who have the opportunity to come out of Africa once a while. We sometimes ask God. I have asked God this many questions and I have asked God to forgive me whenever I asked it anyway.

and I'm asking him to as well forgive me. I asked the same question. We sometimes ask this question. God are you a partial God? We look at Africa and we look at the kind of things that are passing through.

I mean the Africans are passing through. I can tell you I'm not giving you stories. It's real. In Ethiopia, in Sudan, families could sit like this and literally watch their children dying, not because they were sick, but because of starvation.

They have ate their last meal and for the next two days no assurance of food and those who cannot cope will die. In Africa, we are all surrounded with man-made wolves and we are surrounded with all kinds of troubles, wolves, in Congo, in Sudan.

you can go on and name them in Sierra Leon, people dying. I begin to wonder. Are we to talk of religious crisis?

[30 : 14] I came from Kaduna, and I believe my bishop might have told you some of the things. I came from Kaduna, a very hard and difficult area in the north, even though some of us believe that we are even better considered to those who are in the higher northern part of the country.

But I was there in February and in May when the religious crisis came up. People were slaughtered, killed. I begin to wonder where is that God?

And sickness taking over Africa. Right here I was watching over the program by I think SBC, I'm not sure, talking about what is happening, AIDS killing people in Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, people died.

Talk of Indonesia, talk of places like India, earthquake. Poverty taking over Africa and you begin to wonder.

And when we come to the western world, we see things in a different form. Understand me brothers and sisters, know that I am saying that, things are not, I mean, not I'm saying that things are perfectly well here in the western world.

[31 : 35] Yes, there are some problems here and there, but you cannot compare with what is happening somewhere in Africa. I could walk down some streets, of course, and see some people who are struggling to live, but you cannot compare that with what is happening in Africa.

Africa. In fact, I can say it with apology to all of you that in the western world, it seems as if the western world is the vineyard of this man who had everything provided for it.

Everything works. You talk of good gardeners are there. Many Nigerians have run away from home. Good doctors who are Nigerians are now in the US.

You talk of good things, you find them in the western world. May I then send a warning that the Bible said to him that much is given, much is required.

I believe that God is expecting us as a church, and I believe that God is expecting us as individuals to not only present fruits like this on the altar here on every harvest thanksgiving, but I believe that God is expecting us on the last day when the whole world will be harvested.

[32 : 59] He is expecting the western world, the Africans, the Indians, and every other part of the world to as well come to the altar of the living God, the altar of Jesus Christ on that last day, and begin to present fruits of the introduced.

I don't know how many fruits you will produce on that day. And I say it again and again, if you say all these trees that we plucked these fruits from did not produce fruit, we will not have fruits to place here.

It will be too bad that on the last day Jacob will not have any fruit to produce to put on the altar of God for his 20 years as a Christian, it will be too bad.

How many souls are you going to present to God on the last day? What are the fruits that God is going to say, yes, Jacob has brought these fruits because of his Christianity for the 20 years.

Here are the fruits he has brought to the altar of God. what type of fruits are you producing? And what is the amount of that fruit he produces?

[34 : 24] It could be terrible, very, very terrible because on a harvest day, there are two sides of the stories. You can see one farmer rejoicing, oh, praise God, my farm made a wonderful thing this year.

I have enough. And you can see another farmer there complaining, oh, I just harvested one and a half back of corn. And somewhere there he has harvested 200 backs of corn.

The ugly harvest points us back to the heavenly harvest. That on the harvest day in heaven in the presence of God, we are going to present fruits.

What are the fruits you and I are going to present? How many of them? Especially to the ground that it has been given proper attention. You see the reason why the owner of the vineyard was so angry with that fig tree is that everything has been provided.

what will be your excuse on the last day if you fail to produce? What fruit are you producing?

[35 : 44] On a harvest day like this, I think we must ask ourselves, how far have I gone with the Lord in pleasing him, in doing his work this one year?

I'm not threatening anybody, but this might be my last harvest in this world. It might be anybody's last harvest. What are we going to tell Jesus on the last day when we will all bring before him the fruits of our labors in this world?

Amen. we felt nice talents we■■ in this Šindung Dick■ to Electric size less luc biting according to the■