

A Time to Repent

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[0:00] Take your Bibles then this morning and open them to our text and our text is Luke chapter 13 so we're going to begin chapter 13 this morning and as we kind of make our way through this gospel the gospel of Luke finally got through chapter 12!

It's a long long chapter and now we're into chapter 13 and yet I'll go ahead and give you a heads up we're really on the same subject as last week and which makes it difficult for me a preacher because I realize that on most Sunday mornings I'm preaching to the choir not the one back here but now all of you in this sense that when we get to those passages that are decidedly evangelistic I'm preaching to those who already know these things and have already received Jesus and yet I am also aware of the the very very sure reality that anytime we gather in this place there will be those here who are unbelieving and so though the message this morning is specifically evangelistic not because I want it to be that way or made it that way because the text is Jesus intended for Jesus intended for Jesus intended for Jesus intended for it to be then I am primarily going to be speaking to those who have not yet repented not yet believed in Jesus as Lord and Savior but I am

■ while we may not be unrepentant in the sense of salvation, we do know those who have not yet repented.

And I believe this text will not only speak then to the unbeliever, but also speak to the believing to give us a greater awareness of the unbelieving around us and what a serious condition that is. All right, so I've said enough about the text. I'm going to say more about it by way of introduction after I read the passage, but let's go ahead and read the passage. Verses 1 through 9 in Luke chapter 13.

[2:57] And there were present at that season some who told him about the Galatians, excuse me, the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

And Jesus answered and said to them, Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered such things?

I tell you, no. But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those 18 on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem?

I tell you, no. But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. He also spoke this parable. A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down. Why does it use up the ground?

[4 : 12] But he answered and said to him, Sir, let it alone this year also until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well.

But if not, after that, you can cut it down. All right? Now, to begin with, I feel the need to say something about the context.

That's very important, context. I mean, no verse of Scripture, no group of verses of Scripture ever stand isolated from what comes before and what follows after.

You've heard me say this many times before, and it's not only important in preparation for preaching, but it's very important for your own personal Bible study. Context is very important. And to get at the correct meaning of any particular passage, you must consider the context. That is, how that particular passage fits or relates to everything around it.

[5:12] So I need to say a word about that. Now, I would also say that in most cases, the Bible provides us some clue about this, some heads up about the context, and that's true of our passage this morning.

In fact, in our passage this morning that I just read a moment ago, the clue as to the context is right on the front, right on the front end. And so verse 1 then begins by saying, there were present at that season.

That's a clue about the context. At that season, or the New American Standard puts it this way, at that or on that same occasion.

Now, that's a contextual clue. What occasion is verse 1 talking about? Well, it is the occasion of chapter 12 that came before.

All right, so we've got to look before. And you know, of course, you've heard it said many times, that your Bible has chapter divisions and verses, and yet the original writing had none of those things.

[6:18] All right, so you can have something happening in chapter 1 chapter that carries over into the next chapter, and that's the case here. Because the setting of chapter 12 runs on into the first part, first 9 verses, of chapter 13.

And if you've been with us for the past several Sundays, then you know what the setting is. But in case you haven't, let me remind you. Chapter 12, verse 1.

At the very beginning of that chapter, we have the words, an innumerable multitude. You remember? An innumerable multitude. That means tens of thousands, perhaps, of people have gathered together so that they trampled one another.

So we have this huge crowd that is gathered together. I've reminded you of that about every time I've preached since we started chapter 12. Now I have to remind you about that here in chapter 13 because it carries over into this chapter.

This huge crowd is gathered around Jesus. And then in the bulk of chapter 12, in fact, 51 verses, from verse 2 on to verse 53, Jesus teaches His disciples, remember?

[7:28] Jesus had grouped together His disciples for a time of teaching. And yet we understand that the multitudes, this tens of thousands of people that had pressed in, gathered around, they were pressing in close to hear what Jesus had to say.

But Jesus is speaking to His disciples. But then in verse 54, and I mentioned this last week, Jesus then turns to the unbelieving.

He turns to the multitude, the really hostile, actually, turns to them, those that had pressed close, and He had some pretty tough things to say to them, the multitudes, the unbelieving.

And this is what we have at the close of chapter 12. And so now, beginning in chapter 13, what's Jesus doing? He's still talking to the multitudes. Not directly to His disciples, though they are still present, of course.

But now turning to the crowds, the unbelieving. And so this is an important contextual observation. Jesus is speaking to the unbelieving. Jesus is speaking to the unrepentant, those that had crowded around Him.

[8:44] And so Jesus is preaching here evangelistically. That's the setting here. And it's very important that we get that. He's not speaking to believers.

He's speaking to the unbelieving. And so what has Jesus been saying to the multitudes back there in chapter 12? Do you remember? He had been talking to them about the subject of judgment.

Judgment. The judgment of God upon sinners. And remember, He said to them that you're good at forecasting the weather, the coming weather, but you're absolute failures at understanding spiritual things.

You have absolutely failed at discerning or interpreting this present time. And so He was saying that the only answer to the sure and final judgment of God, the only answer to the judgment of God standing right here before you, it's me.

And, but they could not or would not see that. And so that's what we have at the close of chapter 12.

[9:56] And Jesus is essentially saying you had better see it. That is, you had better do what is right and do it now or face the sure and eternal judgment of God.

And so then in chapter 13, 1 through 9, our text for this morning, we have a continuation of what is going on in chapter 12. Jesus continues His words to the unbelieving and interestingly, it begins with an interruption.

Jesus doesn't interrupt what He's talking about. Luke doesn't interrupt in His account, but the people who are there interrupt. They interrupt Jesus in His flow of thought, in His teaching, in His subject.

And so there's an interruption. And so some of the people in the crowd brought up an incident that had occurred between Pilate and some Galilean worshipers.

And to me, that just kind of seemed strange. I mean, at least on the face of it. Without really looking in depth and we're going to look in depth this morning. But it seems strange, doesn't it?

[11:07] I mean, what did this incident with Pilate and these Galileans, what did that have to do with what Jesus was talking about? Now, perhaps stranger still was Jesus' response after they brought this up.

He said, unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Now, what kind of response was that? I'm just kind of, you know, out loud, I am thinking about the text, responding to the passage, and perhaps you have thought the same thing.

This just seems strange. This is an interruption. It doesn't have anything to do with what Jesus was talking about, seemingly. And Jesus' response to them seems a little strange as well. So what's going on?

Well, see, this is what I want us to get here at the beginning. You need to understand the meaning behind the interruption. And you need to understand the meaning behind Jesus' response to the interruption.

And when you discover the meaning behind these two things, then you will come face to face with the dire situation this world finds itself in.

[12:21] And perhaps, for some of you here, your own dire situation. Serious situation. Here's what it all comes down to, this passage.

Taking what has happened in chapter 12, the close of it, and then what now is going to take place here in the first part of chapter 13. Here's what it all comes down to. The judgment of God is coming.

Or rather, I should say it this way. This world is fast approaching the judgment of God, the final judgment of God, and so, it is time to repent.

That's what he is saying. That's what this passage is about. This world, the unbelieving, are fast approaching God's righteous judgment, His final judgment.

We don't know when it's going to be, but it's coming. Or rather, we're coming to it. Repent. And so, it is time to repent. All right, now let's just see how this unfolds in the passage.

[13:32] And we begin with what I would call an erroneous supposition. That is, these in the crowd, and perhaps everyone in the crowd, we just have some who voiced it, these in the crowd, supposed a certain thing.

They had a certain supposition about God, about life, about things, but they were completely wrong. Erroneous. An erroneous supposition.

And so again, Jesus is speaking to the multitudes, right? The unbelieving. We get that from chapter 12, and now he's still talking to them. And he had been telling them that they did not know how to read the signs of the times.

That's what he'd been telling them in chapter 12. That is, really, they did not know how to read, did not correctly read the scriptures, the word of God. And they did not correctly understand the spiritual significance of Jesus present at that very time, nor did they understand his message, nor did they understand his ministry.

And to illustrate that, and this is again at the close of chapter 12, Jesus then gives them a parable. Remember, we looked at this last week, a parable about a man who had been brought before the judge, who was being brought before the judge.

[14:58] I mean, he's headed toward court. And in the parable, the suggestion is that this man should make peace with his accuser before he appears before the judge.

Remember, this is in chapter 12. Because if he doesn't make peace with his accuser before he finally gets to the courtroom and stands before the judge, if he doesn't do it before then, the judge is going to find him guilty and turn him over to the bailiff, as it were, and the bailiff over to the police, and the police over to the warden, and the warden is going to throw him into prison, and he will stay there until he pays his full debt.

That's the parable at the close of chapter 12. And the whole point of the parable is the eternal judgment of God upon the sinner. All right, so Jesus has been telling them this unbelieving multitude of Jews present that day, you'd better correctly read the time, because you're not. You had better do what is right. you had better see your Savior, and you had better receive, respond to your Savior, or face the final eternal judgment of God, and all that comes at the close of chapter 12.

And it's pretty clear, really. But then we have this interruption by some in the crowd. Verse 1, look at it again.

[16 : 27] There were present at that season, or on that occasion, some who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

So they just got to bring this up. It apparently is a current news item. And perhaps everybody is talking about this. It's the buzz, you know, what has happened lately. Now, we don't really know anything about this.

We are given just scant details here in the text, and Luke, of course, does not elaborate any on this atrocity.

And we don't have any other historical references inside the Bible or outside of the Bible about this. And so we just don't know any more than what we have right here. But apparently, I think we can surmise that there were some Galilean Jews who were in the temple in Jerusalem offering sacrifices, because that's where you would do that.

And perhaps, though we don't know this for sure, but perhaps these particular Galileans were rebels against the Roman Empire. Perhaps they were part of that group, group of insurrectionists or anarchists or zealots, Jewish zealots, we don't really know, but we can kind of read between the lines and Pilate, of course, the Roman governor of Judea, decided to make them examples.

[17 : 50] And he had them brutally executed while in the very act of worshiping there in the temple, offering sacrifice.

They brought their sacrifices. And Pilate chose that very moment to make a very public display of his judgment against all those who would rebel against the Roman Empire.

I think we could maybe imagine in our day, especially in our day, group of ISIS soldiers barging into a Christian house church in Iraq and beheading some of the leaders.

Perhaps they were taking the Lord's Supper and they behead some of the members of this church and the blood splatters on the plate of communion bread.

I'm sorry, that's pretty gross, but that's kind of what happened here, how serious and what an atrocity this was. Now, we could go on and on and speculate about this event, but I want you to understand that the specifics of this event are not what's important here.

[19 : 07] And the event itself is not nearly as important, now get this, as the thinking that was going on in the minds of those people who brought it up.

that's what's important. What was their thinking? What was their point? Now, they don't say anything about that.

That is, the people who brought this up, they don't say anything about what they were thinking or the point they were wanting to make. Luke doesn't even tell us anything about that, anything about what they may have said as to why they brought this up, but Jesus does.

And this is what's interesting. He read their minds. He knew what they were thinking. And so we have in verse 2, Jesus answered and said to them, do you suppose that these Galatians were worse sinners than all other Galatians?

Galatians, I keep saying that, Galileans. Because they suffered these, you think they're worse sinners? Ah, that's what they were thinking.

[20 : 16] That's what they were thinking here. And now we know the point they were wanting to make. Essentially, they were saying, Jesus, we know how to interpret the times.

You said we don't, but we do. Jesus, we know all about God's judgment on sin and upon sinners. These Galilean brothers of ours suffered this atrocity at the hand of Pilate because they must have been horrible sinners.

that's why this happened. It's sad, yes, Jesus, it's sad to say it, but they somehow deserved it. They deserved it. This must be the judgment of God.

That's what they were thinking. That's the point they wanted to make. And so Jesus says, is that what you suppose? The implication being, you're dead wrong about that.

And then in verse 4, Jesus reminds them of another tragic incident. Or perhaps they were even thinking about this one as well, and Jesus just read their minds.

[21:24] Those 18 on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed. And we don't know anything about that incident either. This, Jesus says, occurred in Jerusalem, just like the other one did, but here we're talking about those who lived in Jerusalem.

We're talking about Judeans now, not Galileans. And there is a pool of Siloam there in Jerusalem, and apparently part of a wall or tower or maybe part of the construction of the aqueduct that would bring the water to the pool, perhaps it collapsed and killed 18 people.

I mean, you know, that may be what happened. We don't really know. But again, the details of the event, the event itself is not the important thing here.

Because Jesus then reveals the common thinking, the common opinion among the Jews. He said, you're thinking, because he knows what they're thinking, that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem.

That's what you're thinking, right? Now, what does Jesus say about that? He says, no. Verse 3, I tell you, no. These Galileans who were brutally murdered were not worse sinners than all other Galileans.

[22:52] I tell you, no. Verse 5, I tell you, no. These Judeans or Jerusalemites who were tragically killed by this tower falling were not worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem. This is an erroneous supposition. You're wrong about this. People today will say, 9-11, the judgment of God.

And people today will say, or have said, Hurricane Katrina, the judgment of God. Joplin tornado, the judgment of God.

And other events like that, even in our day, and they're looking at these things and say, see here, it's the judgment of God. Now, it may be, I don't know. That's a whole other subject.

These things may be the judgment, the divine judgment of God, either His active judgment or rather His permissive judgment. I don't know, but that's not the point here. That's not the point here.

[24:03] The point here is the erroneous supposition that others' sins are somehow worse than yours or mine.

That's what Jesus is getting at. That somehow others' sins are more horrible than mine. More wicked, more vile than mine.

And what does Jesus say? He says, do you suppose that these Galileans were what? Worse sinners. That's the key. That they were worse sinners than all other Galileans.

And Jesus says, no. They were not. See, listen. The point also is the erroneous, fallacious, false supposition and belief that the tragic end of these sinners, these Galileans and these Judeans, the tragic end that these sinners suffered is somehow worse than your ultimate end if you do not repent.

That's his point. He's saying to these people, these Jews, and perhaps to some of you here today, that when you, when a tragedy strikes, when catastrophic events take place, it is not others' sins you should be thinking about.

[25:51] It is yours. Your sin. About your sins you should be thinking. And when you hear about unexpected tragedy and death, comings, suddenly, suddenly upon others, you should be thinking about your unexpected death.

You should be thinking about the horrible death of deaths that you will face if you do not repent. It's just tragedy to think about about Pilate's soldiers killing these Galileans and their blood mixing with their sacrifice.

That's horrible. And to think about this tower falling and crushing 18 people terrible death.

That is nothing compared to what follows that death for those who do not repent. That's his point.

And that takes us really well into the next point of the passage. And so first of all, an erroneous supposition. They supposed something erroneous.

[27:19] And then we have second, a serious proposition. And this comes from Jesus. And so Jesus proposes something that is serious.

Very serious. And twice Jesus says it. He says, I tell you. See, this is a proposition. He's proposing something.

I tell you. And really, every sermon must have a proposition. He is saying, Jesus is saying, this is what you should know. This is what you should do.

Jesus said, I tell you, unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. That's a serious proposition. And he says it twice. And listen, every word is loaded in this one verse, albeit repeated twice. For example, he said, I tell you.

[28 : 23] This is divine revelation. this is a word directly from God. I tell you. You better listen to what he says. I tell you.

And then he says, unless you repent. Every word is loaded. Unless. What does that mean? This is your only option.

This is the only way. There is no escaping God's judgment any other way. And unless you, you repent, you will all likewise perish.

You, you, all. These are all plural. And that is, this applies to every single one of people. Everyone. Pronouns you are all plural. And the word all, all carries the idea of absolute, obviously. it. Jesus is talking to everyone.

[29 : 35] Forget about the Galatians who died there in the temple. That's not the point. You're missing it. Forget about those 18 who died there at the pool of Siloam.

That's not important here. Their sins are no more horrible than yours. And their tragic deaths are no more horrible than yours will be if you do not repent.

repent. I mean, he just takes them straight on. You just kind of imagine, you imagine coming, hey, you hear about those people who died there in Jerusalem.

And Jesus says, unless you repent, you shall likewise perish. Man, do you understand what he's saying? And let's go on with this proposition.

He said, I tell you, unless you repent, we can't skip over that word. That is, unless you believe the truth about your sin, and unless you grieve over your sin, and unless you abandon, turn from your sin, you will perish.

[30 : 46] You will likewise perish. See, every word is loaded. Every word. And it takes kind of this general thought about the judgment of God and brings it home right to your heart.

Look at it. Unless you repent, you will all, what's the next word? Likewise perish. What does that mean? That means if you don't repent, Pilate's going to kill you too.

No. Unless you repent, the tower's going to fall on you too. No, that's not what likewise means here. It's not talking about dying in the exact same way.

Rather, it means to experience the same horror of death and what comes immediately after it. The death of deaths.

Likewise is speaking, is talking about unexpectedly, dying unexpectedly. You too will die unexpectedly. It's talking about being unprepared.

[31 : 59] You too will die unprepared if you do not repent. It's talking about unendingly. You too will die eternally if you do not repent.

And then there's one more word here in this serious proposition from Jesus. I tell you, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

Perish. Not simply die naturally. Even those who repent are going to die one day unless Jesus comes first.

He's talking about eternally. You will die eternally. He's talking about something that will occur after physical death, beyond physical death.

Jesus is talking about judgment. He's been talking about that since verse 54 of chapter 12. He's talking about judgment.

[33 : 00] And so the word perish is not a reference to natural death. Perish is a reference to the final judgment. Eternal judgment.

That beloved passage John 3 16. For God so loved the world. that he gave his only begotten son, his one and only son, that whoever believes on him shall not perish, perish, perish, perish, eternal life, juxtaposed to one another.

Eternal life, he's talking about eternal punishment, eternal perishing. He's talking about judgment. judgment. John 10 28, and I give them eternal life, give those who believe, eternal life, and they shall never perish.

Again, eternal life, perish, they are counter to one another. Eternal life, eternal perishing. He's talking about judgment, eternal judgment.

People, the girl that serves your coffee at Egbert's, she will perish unless she repents. Well, what perspective this puts on things.

[34:21] The clerk that checks you out at Walmart will perish if she does not repent. The carrier who delivers your mail every day will perish if he does not repent.

The people who sit in the cubicles next to you at work, they will perish unless they repent. Your son, your daughter, your husband, your wife, your mother, your father, your lifelong friends, if they do not repent, they will perish.

You, sir, you, man, if you do not repent, you will likewise perish. This is what Jesus says.

This is a serious proposition. Something you must know. something you must do. Repent.

There's one last thing here in this text, and it is a glimmer of hope. I say what comes next gives us grace.

[35:30] It's a grace. It's gracious. And so I've called it a gracious declaration. proposition. An erroneous supposition.

A serious proposition. And then a gracious declaration. And it comes in this parable at the close of this passage. Jesus tells a parable, verses six through nine.

And in the parable I see two things. I see a declaration of grace. I also see an admonition of urgency.

Very clear, both of these things are here. Look at the parable, verse six. A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. And the man, I believe, represents God, creator God.

The fig tree, I believe, represents an individual person. The vineyard is clearly this present world, this present time.

[36:43] God has planted people in this world. and he came seeking fruit on it, and guess what? He found none.

That is, God seeks the fruit of righteousness from his man and woman, and he finds none. Verse seven, then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none.

Cut it down. Why does it use up the ground? God sees his man, his woman, that he's planted, that he's created, and he is useless, useless, wicked, rebellious, nothing of true worth in his man. nothing of redeeming value. And so what should be done? What should happen?

What's the only reasonable thing to do, the righteous thing, the holy thing to do? What does he deserve? To be cut down. To be cut down.

[38:11] Verse eight, and here's the declaration of grace. sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it.

You see? This is the grace of God. Long suffering of God. And I think maybe a specific representation of the work of the Holy Spirit.

You see, though there is nothing of worth in me, sin. Only sin, rebellion, rejection, nothing of worth. Why should I take up space on this earth?

I'm just using up the ground. I'm useless. I'm worthless. But God will wait. God will wait. For what? well, his gardener will break up the hard soil, cultivate it. I think reference to the heart.

[39:16] He'll fertilize, cultivate the heart to make it soft, make it able to receive seed, so the seed can grow. and then he says, and I will fertilize it.

I think it's a reference to the gospel, the application of the gospel. We'll work on the heart and apply the gospel. Then, we put all this together, then comes this admonition of urgency because God will not wait indefinitely, will he?

We get that from the parable. Verse 9 says, and if it bears fruit, well, that's well and good. That is, literally next year, you've come three years, let's wait until next year, next year, we will look at it again, and if it bears fruit, good, good.

But if not, if not, after that, you can cut it down. do you see the grace, the long suffering of God, the grace, the cultivating of the heart, the fertilizing of the word, but you also see the urgency, the urgency.

You're living now, yes. You have life now, life in your body. The gospel is being preached now, right?

[40:58] Yes, absolutely, being preached 24-7 around the world. God's grace is extended now, as far as I know, right now, God's grace is extended.

The conviction of the Holy Spirit is active right now. Second Corinthians 6-2, Paul quotes Isaiah 49-8.

Isaiah the prophet said, In an acceptable time, I have heard you, and in the day of salvation, I have helped you. And then Paul applies that.

He says, Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation.

See, for some of you here this morning, and I say this with deep concern, I don't know who you are, but I say this with all compassion. For some of you here in this place this morning, there is only for you one thing, that is standing between you and the final righteous judgment of God.

[42 : 23] Do you know what it is? It's just time. It's just time. It's just a matter of time. And that time is limited.

Unless you repent, you will likewise perish. Now is the time to repent.

Thank you.