

“Repent”

Luke 3: 1 - 18; Revelation 2:1 – 7; Colossians 1:9 -14; **Luke 13: 1 – 9 (Sermon)**

The Jews wrongfully assumed that calamities and suffering were a direct result of God’s judgment of sin. (Job 4:7; John 9:2)

But The Bible does **not** teach a direct connection between sinning and disasters.

The Bible does **not** teach a “*God is going to zap you*” theology.

Rather The Bible clearly teaches that God is loving, merciful, and forgiving.

In our lesson from Luke 13 Jesus makes it clear that the victims of those two calamities were not more sinful and that the people that escaped these two calamities were not more righteous than the victims.

Jesus used these two calamities to warn people of the need to repent because there is a day of judgment.

Jesus reminds us that our time on earth may end any second.

When God calls us home we all will stand before Jesus to give an account of our life. (Romans 14:12)

The focus of the parable **is not** about judgment but rather the focus is the urgency for all people to repent.

We need to make good use of the time God has given to us and we all need to get right with God by repenting.

Jesus said; ***“I tell you, but unless you repent you will perish as they did.”***

The message of repentance goes all the way through the Bible.

For example Noah preached repentance to the people in his day.

Moses called on the children of Israel to repent; Jonah preached repentance to the people of Nineveh, and most of the Old Testament prophets called for the Israelites to repent.

John the Baptist said, ***“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near.”***

And in the 4th chapter of Matthew we see that Jesus began His ministry by saying, ***“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near”*** (4:17).

The word repent or repentance occurs 56 times in the New Testament.

Therefore we need to be serious about our need to repent.

So, what does it mean to repent?

There are two Greek words which are translated in English as repent.

The Greek word used in Luke 13:5 is *Meta'noia* which means to change one's mind, it involves an instantaneous change of heart, and a sincere regret for unbelief or sin.

Repentance always involves a determination to change your attitude and /or to change your actions.

This is the Greek word John and Jesus used when they said ***“Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand.”***

Repent means to turn away from your sins and to turn to God.

We need to be clear confession and repentance are related but confession and repentance are two different things.

Confession is admitting that you have sinned and a true confession will always lead that person to repent.

We can confess our sinful behavior all day long but if there is no change in our sinful behavior there is no real repentance.

Meta'noia is not the Greek word used when Judas repented after he saw that Jesus was condemned to die in Matthew 27:3.

That Greek word, *Metame'lomai* means to regret because things did not turn out as planned.

That Greek word does not convey any remorse that a person did something wrong.

It simply conveys regret without remorse!

Repentance is much more than just being sorry; repentance is about change.

True repentance comes when we are so sorry that that we do not want to repeat that sin.

Remember that just turning away from our sins will not save us; we have to turn to Jesus for salvation.

We as individual and we as the church need to repent because we are all sinners.

Jesus said; ***“I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”*** (Luke 5:32)

When The Apostle Paul preached in the City of Athens Paul said; ***“In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.”*** (Acts 17:30)

Repentance is not a negative thing.

True repentance is positive when we realize our sins offend The Lord and that with The Lord's help we will not repeat that sin.

Sin separates us from God and true repentance restores our broken relationship with The Lord.

In Luke 13:3 Jesus tells us unless we repent we will all perish.

Repenting should be a way of life for all Christians. 2nd Corinthians 5:17 tells us; ***“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.”***

You see we must continually repent of our sins if we are to enjoy fellowship with our The Lord.

True repentance brings salvation and true repentance brings restoration.

When you became a Christian you received God’s gift of The Holy Spirit but without repentance you cannot be filled with The Holy Spirit each and every day.

The Apostle Paul also emphasized repentance. ***“I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.”*** (Acts 20:21)

Repentance is a necessary part of our faith in Jesus Christ.

Repentance brings refreshment to our souls.

“Repent then and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out and times of refreshing may come from The Lord” (Acts 3: 19 & 20)

True repentance is to be a way of life for all Christians because repentance is a prerequisite for The Holy Spirit to transform a believer into the image of Jesus Christ.

Repenting each day is necessity for all Christians because true repentance makes us available and useful to The Lord.

In our lesson from Colossians we were given a picture of what true repentance looks like.

A truly repentant person will live the way Jesus taught, they will bear good fruit, they will grow in the knowledge of The Lord, they will be thankful, they will filled with joy, and they will be empowered by The Holy Spirit.

The parable of the unproductive fig tree is an allegory.

The unproductive fig tree is the Nation of Israel, the gardener is Jesus, the owner of the vineyard is God, and the 3 years are the time of Jesus’ ministry on earth.

The only reason for the fig tree being in the vineyard is to provide fruit for the owner.

All fig trees in a vineyard take up valuable space and each tree is expected to produce fruit.

Any fruit tree that does not produce fruit deserves to be cut down.

The owner of the vineyard is certainly justified in cutting down any tree that does not produce fruit.

This parable of the fig tree clearly teaches judgment but this parable also clearly teaches grace.

Both grace and judgment are necessary and both grace and judgment come from God.

Without grace, words of judgment only beat us into submission.

Conversely, grace without judgment leaves us with the false impression that there is no need for confession, repentance, and / or salvation.

The parable of the unproductive fig tree also gives us a picture of God's mercy and grace.

You see God gives us one more last chance to repent.

The context of this parable was Jesus was giving the Nation of Israel one more last chance to accept their Messiah.

So how are we to apply this parable to us?

First this parable is a warning to all people who have **not** asked Jesus to be their Savior.

None of us have any guarantee that we will be alive on this earth tomorrow.

Recently we had many examples of natural and man-made disasters; hurricanes, flooding, tornadoes, wild fires, violence, terrorist acts, etc

In the parable of the fig tree Jesus is making an offer for all of the unsaved people of the world to come to Him and receive the gift of eternal life!

*If you were to die tonight are you **100% absolutely sure** that you would go to heaven?*

If not please see me or one of the Pastors right after worship.

I urge you to settle this question before you leave here today.

If you have accepted Jesus as your savior you have already been redeemed and you are assured of eternal life.

So the message of this parable to you is "**repent**" so you can be filled with The Holy Spirit and so The Lord can use you.

In our lesson from Luke 3 we read that the Pharisees and Sadducees came and heard John The Baptist but there was no change in their heart.

You see true repentance always leads to a change in the way we think, the way we talk, and the way we act.

John said; "**produce fruit in keeping with repentance**" (Luke 3:8).

And in Romans 12:2 we are given this command, "**Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.**"

The New Living Translation puts Romans 12:2 like this "*Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think*".

If we think that certain sins are okay, then we will continue to commit them and we will continue to be a shallow Christian.

However, if we know our actions are displeasing to God and that our actions negatively affect our relationship with The Lord we **will** discontinue that sinful behavior.

Everything we think, say or do should reflect the holy character of Jesus.

If Jesus is our Lord, our lives will be producing fruit that reflects a repentant heart.

We will produce fruit that pleases our Lord!

We said that Jesus was the gardener in the parable of the fig tree.

Jesus' last words on earth were a command for His disciples to carry on His work. (Matthew 28: 17 -20)

As Jesus' disciples, we are called to be Jesus' arms, His hands, His legs, His eyes, and His ears.

So as Christians our role in the parable is that we are to be a gardener in God's garden and we are called to garden the way Jesus did.

The unproductive fig trees are those unsaved people God has put in our lives.

The unproductive fig trees are also those people who are Christian in name only because there is no fruit in their life.

As Christian we have been called to create an environment conducive for spiritual growth.

As Christians we have been called to help, to nurture, and to encourage the people around us to be fruitful human beings.

Love, mercy, forgiveness, and compassion are to automatically flow out in everything we do and say.

As Christians we have been called to tend our part of God's garden.

It is important to note that the gardener in the parable of the fig tree did not mention anything about working on the tree itself.

But the gardener asks to work on the soil.

As gardeners we are to work to produce an environment that is conducive to bearing fruit.

Encouraging, **not** condemning.

Nurturing **not** pruning.

In 1st Corinthians Paul tells us ***"The Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. For we are God's fellow workers"*** (1st Corinthians 3:5b, 6, 9a)

There is an old saying *“You are the only Bible that some people will ever read”*.

People are watching us all the time.

They want to see if being a Christian really makes a difference in our daily lives.

They look to see how we treat other people, they listen to hear how we respond when we are mistreated or blamed for something we did not do.

The unsaved person notices if church is a priority to us, they notice whether we spend our time and our money on temporal things or eternal matters.

They observe how we respond to the hurts and needs of other people.

They hear when we give God the credit for the blessings in our lives.

They listen when we tell them what Jesus is doing in our lives.

We all need to ask ourselves; *“Am I nurturing, encouraging, and creating a growing environment for the fig trees God has planted in our vineyard?”*

The parable of the fig tree clearly teaches that we all need to repent because we are all sinners and we all fall short of God’s glory.

This parable clearly teaches us that no time should be wasted.

We all need to ask ourselves; *“am I producing fruit pleasing to The Lord”* and *“what kind of gardener am I?”*

We all need to live each day in such a way that we will look forward to standing before The Lord to give an account of how we have used the time and the gifts The Lord has given to us.

God’s Word to us today is crystal clear.

If your life is not showing the fruit of repentance then you need to repent.

You may need to repent something that you have done, something you are doing, or something that you have not done.

I challenge each of us to think about what we would do if we knew we only had one more week to live on this earth.

Would our time be spent on self-pleasure?

Would our time be spent to mend broken relationships?

Would our time be spent to get right with God?

Would our time be spent telling other people about Jesus?

Am I producing good fruit for my Lord?

Remember we can confess our sinful behavior all day long but if there is no change in our sinful behavior there is no real repentance.

The evidence of repentance is producing fruit pleasing to The Lord.

AMEN