

The Barren Fig Tree – Time is Given, But Not Forever | ■ Luke 13:6–9

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Preacher: Pastor Patrick Dailey

[0:00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we are encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ. I'm Pastor Patrick Daly, and each week I share sermons that balance the grace and love of Jesus Christ with the truth of the Word of God.

Together, we'll explore Scripture using observation, interpretation, and application. This helps us discover practical ways to live out our faith every single day.

Let's dive in together into God's Word. Well, good morning, everyone. How are we doing this morning? Are we doing okay? Well, it's good to see each and every one of you as we are going forth, continuing our sermon series through the parables of Christ.

Thy kingdom come, which is part of the Lord's Prayer. When we think of these parables, we think of spiritual truths that come from Christ's teachings that are not only spoke to the audience back then, but they speak to us continually.

What's so powerful about the Word of God is that the Word of God speaks to us just as God continues to speak to us every single day. Can I get an amen?

[1:13] It's so powerful and important for us to know. The Word that we have in our hands is something that is living and active. It's for us to read and to observe the text, to learn lessons from all of the Word of God.

But also, as we go through this, we have to think of what we can apply to our very lives. And let's face it, the world that we live in is constantly changing. There's technological advances, cultural shifts.

You turn on the news and it's just nothing but craziness. But in that craziness, despite the chaos like a raging sea, we know that it is Jesus Christ who commands the sea.

We know that it is the God of all creation that is constant, everlasting to everlasting. Being the same yesterday, today, and forever. And the same God that spoke into existence the creation of the heavens and the earth.

The same God that commands the sea. Made each and every one of us with intentionality and detail. And calls for all of us to receive salvation by believing in Him through faith.

[2:26] And today, we're going over this parable, the barren fig tree. How many of you have read something in Scripture about fig trees where Jesus curses the fig tree?

Where Jesus is going by and you're like, why is Jesus so angry at this fig tree? What did the fig tree do wrong? This actually will help us in our understanding of why that is.

As I was preparing for the sermon, I found to be very interesting that when you see in this parable, it's expected for a fig tree to grow as, depending upon the variant of the plant, it can grow figs within the first year, as early as the first six months.

But for the case of this parable, it's supposed to, within two to three years, is more common. But there are variants where it can grow even faster.

What's interesting about fig trees, so let's say within two to three years, it should be producing figs. And typically, twice a year, the tree would be full of figs.

[3:49] And when we think of that, we think of someone coming onto the scene and being frustrated at the fact that this tree that's supposed to bear not just one crop, but twice a year, giving the fig tree time and

nothing happens.

How many of you have planted before? Right? Is the expectation to plant a fruit tree just to look at the tree?

I mean, I guess that's part of it, right? But we want to have apples or oranges or apricots, right? You want to have grapes on the vine. And in this case, we're going to see the expectation of figs growing on the fig tree.

Let's pray together, and we'll go into the text, and we'll go further. Heavenly Father, Lord of all creation, we are grateful that we are here today as we're going through these parables.

Such simplicity, but yet through simplicity, depth. We're grateful for that. We're grateful that you are the Lord of all creation, and you are the sovereign God.

[5:03] We're thankful that you keep your promises, and that your word is living and active, and that you continue to speak to us through the Holy Spirit.

Father, I pray that if there's any insight that needs to be revealed, any healing or comfort, let it be done so today, according to your will.

Father, we recognize that everyone here comes from, we all have a different backstory, and I pray that everyone here or everyone watching online will come to know who you are, know Jesus Christ as the way, the truth, and the life grow in you, produce fruit, and be moved to do good in your name. It is in the name of Jesus that we pray and we all say together, amen. So let's turn our Bibles. We're going to go to the next slide here.

Luke chapter 13, verses 6 through 9, but I told the half truth. It's Luke chapter 13. We're going to start from verse 1. So I apologize in advance, but the parable is from verses 6 to 9.

[6:19] It's on page 1037, found in your ESV Pew Bibles. Or feel free to use your mobile device, your Bible of choice, whether that's a, you know, new revised standard version, NIV, ESV, KJV, NKJV, whatever that may be.

Let's turn to the Gospel of Luke chapter 13, amen. All right, are we all there? All right. So in order for us to understand what is going on in this scene, we see here that there is the parable of the barren fig tree.

And right before that, you might see a header that says repent or perish. And this helps us with our understanding of why this parable was being taught in the first place.

So there were some who were present at that very time who told him about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. That is not a good scene at all.

Something happened. Something happened where, well, there was not a good event that happened, right? Blood being mingled with sacrifices, you can get a pretty good image of what that is.

[7:30] And he answered them, Jesus is saying, Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all of the Galileans because they suffered in this way? No. I tell you, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

Then it goes on. 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. And we look at this as a second to help us with our understanding of the barren fig tree.

Because what you have is two bad events that happened, two tragedies that happened. Well, we have tragedies today, don't we? We had the tragedy in the text here that's talking about whatever blood being spilled, right?

Unfortunately, a mass killing, a murder, something to that effect. But also this tower in Siloam that fell and 18 people were killed.

[8:34] And what Christ is talking about is how, look, do you think they were that worse of sinners? He's speaking to the fact that there are back then and there are people even now who say, well, they had it coming.

They were obviously wicked people and they deserve to die. But Christ is speaking to that, saying, well, wait a minute. You are a sinner as well. You need to come to faith.

That helps us understand what we're going to see in the barren fig tree. Because for the people that Christ is speaking to, their hearts were hardened, thinking, oh, well, you know, it's not really a bad

tragedy.

They must have been worse sinners. What a horrible attitude to have towards a tragic event that happened. Christ is saying, you need to repent, right? The changing of the mind.

Or you too will be like them. You too will perish. And so then we go into, this helps set the scene again, the parable of the barren fig tree. He told them this parable.

[9:35] So because of what was happening, because of him speaking to this, he goes in. A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. And he came seeking fruit on it and found none.

And he said to the vine dresser, look, for how many years? For three years. Right? Now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and I find a little bit?

None. Zero. Right? I find none. So now what? Cut it down. Get rid of it. Why should it use up the ground? And he answered him, sir, let it alone this year also until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good. But if not, you can cut it down. So we see here just right within the text, there is going to be some additional time, an extra year.

Now, as I was mentioning with fig trees, let's just say for the sake of argument, between the second and third year, it would be producing fruit. So it would make sense as to why someone, when you're planting a tree into the ground and you're wanting it to bear fruit.

[10:40] You're wanting to see within, you know, okay, figs are going to happen six months at a time. Right? Twice a year there's going to be figs. And I want to have some figs. Right? And so it's not happening.

What a frustrating scenario to be in, especially for those of us who have planted trees with the expectation of receiving, like I said, apples, oranges, figs, apricots, whatever it is.

There has to be something wrong with this fig tree. And we see not only in the physical world when there's something like this, you might have the thought, it's just a bad tree. Let's get rid of it.

Let's just remove it. You know, I've given it a certain amount of time. It doesn't really have any value to me. Let's get rid of it. But you have the gardener then that's coming onto the scene.

You have the owner and the gardener. Gardener is coming onto the scene saying, well, wait a minute. Let's give it more time. Let's give it one more year. And so what we're seeing here, the fig tree should bear fruit by the third year.

[11:41] There are some scholars that are saying that that three year time period is a representation of Christ's ministry, representing his death, burial and resurrection. There's some case that has been made for that.

And there's also been what's very interesting is that the fig tree has typically been represented as the people of God, not bearing fruit.

So here's what's interesting. The Lord giving more time, right? You have the owner giving more time, the gardener to work on it and cultivate it, allowing for more time for the fig tree representing Israel to bear more fruit, which is symbolism for paving the way for salvation so that more time can happen for more people to come to salvation.

Does that make sense? You can see that right away. And there's quite a few verses. We don't have time to go through all the verses, but there's a lot of verses that show the fig tree being represented in the people of God.

Does that make sense? Can I get an amen if that makes sense? All right. We can keep going. So cut it down. Why should it use up the ground, right? The tree is absorbing the resources. It's not producing anything in return.

[12:57] So the expectation, just like with any tree, is that it should produce fruit. And in the same way, when we've talked about in other parables, the seed of the word being planted into good soil, we are to grow, right?

And we are to produce fruit. That's so important for us in our walk with the Lord. And so Christ is coming in, right? The representation of the vine dresser or the gardener who's coming in, giving it more time.

The digging is representing obstacles that may have been happening around with the fig tree. And fertilizing or adding manure, as it's saying, is adding nourishment to it.

So if you see this tree that might have rocks with it, or it might, the ground needs to be cultivated. Do you see that the vine dresser or the gardener is using intentional care into the fig tree so that it

can produce fruit?

You know, you go on YouTube and you see, you type in the search engine, why is your fig tree not bearing fruit? Well, there has to do with how, what is the ground like? How are you cultivating the soil?

[14:04] Are you watering it? It's like those kind of questions that you have to think about. And that's what we're seeing here, is that the gardener, with his love and his care for the tree, that's what's happening here.

And so we can also think of how throwing out the tree is a representation, like we know. We've talked about parables with the fish being thrown out, right?

Or the wheat and the tares, right? You want to remove those weeds? Well, in this case, it's showing if it's a bad tree, let's throw it out, which we know is a representation of judgment. So there's more time before there's some sort of judgment with this fig tree.

It's really fascinating. And in verse 9, when it's saying there's this choice that the fig tree has to essentially make, whether it's going to bear fruit or not. If you go back in verse 9, if it should bear fruit next year, well and good.

That's a weird word right there, right? Well, that's good if it bears fruit. But if not, you can cut it down. So I had to look at, that's so bizarre and wild for the language to say that.

[15:15] So I had to go into the Greek and it's basically saying, if this tree bears fruit, it is good and secure. Some translations have even gone to say, if it bears fruit, so be it.

But it will be secure, it will be saved instead of cast out or thrown out or whatever. So the outcome then depends on how the tree responds.

Let's go to that next slide here. So I was mentioning here, right, the tragedy and repentance. And then finally, further, is talking about the woman being freed from a disabling spirit, which is indicating fruit that is coming out of Christ, basically.

There's healing that comes from Christ. There's transformation that comes from Christ. But showing the importance to the people of God and even showing the importance for us that we receive the seed of the word, we're to grow into trees, and we are to bear good fruit.

And so in all of this then, it comes with the question, we can go to that next slide then, is what can we learn from this? It's a very simple and it's also a very short parable.

[16:21] So the first thing that we can learn is that God gives us time, or God gives time but not forever. So God is giving more, or the owner, the gardener, they were talking about giving one more year for this fig tree to grow.

Much like how when we think of the time period in which God gives us a certain amount of time to respond to salvation for our lives. Much like how God is giving a year for this tree to produce fruit. So God gives time but not forever, right? And we know that when we think of God, that God is patient. It's not the question of, will God be patient?

It's how are we going to respond to God's call for our lives? When we think of this fig tree and how this applies to us, this lesson that we can learn, let us remember how important it is for us to respond to the invitation, the time that's been allotted for us, to respond to God's call for our life by receiving salvation as the free gift.

In 2 Corinthians 6, verse 2, you don't have to turn there, it actually says that now is the favorable time, which is known as the, now is the time, the day of salvation, it says.

[17:48] Isn't that interesting? A lauded amount of time that God gives for us. The second thing then is that salvation is available for all, from Jew to Gentile.

The fig tree representing Israel. The extra time is allowing not only for the fruit tree to bear fruit, but also the extension, right?

When we think of the mystery of the gospel being revealed to all, whosoever believes shall not perish but have eternal life. It's extending time and it's extending reach so that all can respond.

The people of God were given time and now all are invited to receive the grace from Jesus Christ. Can I get an amen? Does this make sense?

I want to make sure we understand this, right? And the next thing is that Christ, representing the vine dresser, advocates for us. It is not just a, it is an amount of time before final judgment will happen.

[18:50] That's what we know within parables. That's what we know within the word of God, that there is a final judgment. When we think of Revelation 20, showing the final judgment, when I talked about the weed and the tares, and I talked about the parable of the net, it goes directly into Revelation.

And the connectedness that we find within Scripture is wonderful. Looks like we have someone in the back. Can you check it out real quick?

That's all right. It might be the dog owner. That's all right.

It's also for us to think that when you come to Christ, let God cultivate your life.

Let God work in and through you. We are all a work in progress. We all, before we know the Lord, it's a journey to know who Christ is.

[19:57] And upon knowing Christ, it's a journey in him, being molded into who God wants us to be. Experiencing healing and transformation, comfort and understanding of things that might not have made sense before, but they start to make sense now.

And it's my prayer for you that you will come to know the Lord and grow in him and produce that fruit. Be moved to do good in his name.

And what's even fascinating when we think of other verses in Scripture, in John 15, 2, every branch that does not bear fruit, he prunes so that it may bear more fruit.

And that's interesting. The Lord working on plants, as it were, to produce more fruit. Haven't we pruned before? We've pruned a plant before, I'm sure, for a lot of us, right?

But some of us may have gone through a pruning process, as it were. And in all of this, then, we must allow God to work.

[21:06] If you are a Christian and you believe in the Lord, let God work in your life every single day. Are you the same person that you were in a spiritual sense a year ago?

Five years ago? It's really remarkable how God can truly transform your life. Putting on the new self. Understanding truly that you are a new creation.

Knowing that there's nothing to worry about or to be anxious about. That's hard to do. I get it. But it's continued transformation for our very lives.

Let's go to that next slide, then. If we can. If not, that's all right. Sorry. Let me go to that next slide, please.

It's important for us to know when here at Ontario Community, we read the text and we look at what are the lessons? What's the historical and cultural value?

[22:10] We learn the lessons so that we can grow. But that third piece is so critical for us is what do we do about this? How do we live this out in our everyday life?

All right, pastor. You preached on the parable of the barren fig tree. It didn't produce fruit and gave it more time. What does that got to do with me?

How do I live this out? Well, the first thing is, today is the day of salvation. Respond now. And this is for people who don't know who Jesus Christ is.

Understand the simple gospel. 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verses 1 through 4, which talks about believing in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Believing in the Lord and being saved. Knowing that Christ is a fulfillment of scripture, of prophecy. That he's all that you need to secure eternal life.

[23:11] That's the first and foremost. If you don't know the Lord, respond now. And repentance, when we talk about this idea, I've mentioned it many times before. It's not just about confessing your sins.

It's about the change of mind for who God is so that you can understand that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord. It's much more than just stopping sin.

It's much greater. Because here's the thing. As we repent to the point where we believe, right? As our minds get changed to believe in Christ, we continue to repent.

We continue to experience transformation. Knowing more deeply and more intimately who the Lord is. And so God's patience, the time that's allotted for us to respond, it's not going to be forever. But it's meant to lead to transformation. To become that new creation. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down.

[24:18] And that's always a scary one. But let this be a call for you to bear good fruit. Let this be a call for you to respond now to the call that God has for you.

That kind of leads into that second one, doesn't it? Let today be the day that you bear fruit. You may have heard the famous verse that says that faith without works is what?

Dead. Right? Faith without deeds. Depending on your translation that you use. But it's the same concept. We have to bear fruit that God desires transformation that we live it out every single day. In how we live our life. How we conduct ourselves. How we interact with believers and non-believers. It's not just about what you say. It's also what you do.

And what I mean by that is, look, we live in this everyday world where we deal with all sorts of people, don't we? Do we just interact with Christians on a day-to-day basis? Well, no. We interact with all different sorts of people.

[25:20] Are you being salt and light in all that you say and all that you do? Are you being a representative for Christ, even if that's in the workplace, even if that's in the political arena?

Whatever it is. Be that ambassador for Christ. Exhibiting the light, love, and truth. In all that you say and in all that you do.

That's a challenge, isn't it? We're not perfect. But God continues to transform us so that we can respond much better. So let today be the day that you bear fruit.

We think of love, joy, peace, patience, and kindness. We think of the fruit of righteousness. In 2 Corinthians 13, verse 5, examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith.

That examination is not to be, it sounds like a scary thing, but it's really just a reminder. It's a reminder. It's a reminder for us. It's like the famous saying, check yourself before you wreck yourself.

[26:30] Many of you heard that one before, right? Check yourself before you wreck yourself. Well, we can think in Scripture, right? Well, examine yourselves to see whether you're in the faith or not, right?

It's pretty similar. But also in John, chapter 15, verse 8, By this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit.

How interesting is it that the Lord of all uses this agricultural kind of language for us because it's so simple.

Anyone can really understand it. Children can understand it. Hey, Mom, why doesn't that tree have any peaches on it? Why doesn't that tree have apricots anymore?

You can think of those kind of things. And then finally, let God work in you to share the gospel. If you feel unfruitful, perhaps this is a call for you to let God prune you, to work in you.

[27:31] Sometimes our hearts do get hardened, don't they? Sometimes we go through experiences where we're just not having it. Let God work in and through you.

God calls for us to grow in him so that we share the good news of the gospel. That can be with a simple conversation about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But it can also be the ministry of presence.

Sometimes when someone is going through a tragedy. Instead of like we found with the Tower of Siloam or whatever happened with Pilate and the Galileans, being present with people.

Sometimes when someone is going through a crisis, just sitting next to them and not saying anything at all is just as powerful or even more powerful at times.

I know there have been times when things have happened to people and I don't know what to say. But just showing up, that is powerful.

[28:44] Spiritual growth is a process. And when we are present with people, when we share in the good news of the gospel, when we're standing firm on truth and dealing in love, right, the balance between grace and truth, we are living out the word.

We're living out God's call in our life. Let us be reminded of Philippians chapter 1 verse 6. He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion.

Again, we're all a work in progress. Let God work in your life. And in Matthew chapter 5 verse 16, many of you know this one, let your light shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

It's so important for us. When we get educated, when we receive an education, we learn new concepts and principles, we have got to live it out.

Every single day. With our daily interactions with people. Don't just keep it up here. Exhibit it here. In the heart. In how you live your life.

[30:03] That's so important for us. The fig tree then was given more time. Was the tree given forever though? The tree was given a year.

Much like how we are given a certain amount of time for us to respond to salvation through faith. Given a certain amount of time for us to share the gospel with other people.

But also a certain amount of time to live and love like Jesus. Ask yourself. Are you bearing fruit? Or are you not? You shall know them. By their fruits. And so as we come to this conclusion. Let us remember.

As God works in and through you. Other people are affected. Where they experience. The presence of God. The love that comes from him.

[31:07] Healing and transformation. I think of how so many times in scripture where it says. I was blind. But now I can see. Not only does scripture talk about physical healings.

But also spiritual healings. It's just like how scripture says so many times. Let he who has ears. Let him what? Hear.

Right? Or one that has eyes. Let them see. Or whatever it may be. It's not just the physical. It's also the spiritual. We have to remember that as we.

As we go forth. Let us remember that we are called to bear fruit. And to be fruitful. And to multiply. That doesn't just mean having strong families and strong marriages.

But certainly it does. But also how we multiply disciples. People growing in Christ. Let's pray together. And Father we thank you.

[32:11] For this time. And this opportunity. For us to gather together. Father I pray that this parable. Has been. Taught. And it has been preached.

In such a way. That it is understood. By those. Who are listening. May they hear. And may they understand. I pray. I pray.

I pray also. For. Transformation. And if there's anyone. Who doesn't know who you are. That they may come to believe in you. To believe in the Lord.

And be saved. Believing in the death. Burial. And resurrection. Of Jesus Christ. I pray for continued growth. That we may bear fruit. And that we may be moved.

To live out this faith. Every single day. Lord you give us. A certain amount of time. You mold us. You cultivate us. May we.

[33:07] Not be fruitless. But full of fruit. In what we say. And in what we do. It is in the name of Jesus. That we pray. And we all say together.

Amen. Amen. Thank you for listening. For this week's message. From Ontario Community Church. I pray. That you are encouraged. And strengthened.

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Every single day. You are encouraged.