

Small Group Material Lent 2019

Learning from Jesus 3

Our Repentance Luke 13.1–9

Recognising the universal need for our personal repentance for salvation

Welcome (10 mins)

You may like to take the opportunity, for those who wish to, to share progress with any things they have either 'given up' or 'taken up' for Lent, and to encourage each other.

Worship (10 mins)

Meditate on Amos 5:24 Isaiah 30:18-19 Psalm 33:4-5

Ask three different people to look up these passages and read them out slowly while others listen; or print them out beforehand.

Sing or listen to a hymn or chorus (Now, or may be more appropriate at the end of the Session)

Suggestion (Words at end) :-

O Lord, The Clouds are gathering

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTI8BWfHnMg>

Word (50 mins)

Read Luke 13: 1-9

Questions (see **Leaders' Supplementary Notes** for additional material and suggestions to aid discussion if you find them helpful.)

1. On first reading of this passage is there any verse that particularly stands out for you?
 - a. in verses 1-5
 - b. in the parable verses 6-9
2. Trace the connection of thought between vv1-5 and the parable of vv 6-9. In the light of the parable, what is meant by "repent"? cf 3.8a
3. Who do you think the vineyard owner might represent in this story? And the gardener? Explain
4. How can justice and mercy co-exist?
5. How do you react to the messages of the need for repentance, and the concept of judgement? How might you explain these, and "salvation" in simple terms to someone exploring the Christian faith?
6. Is there a connection between repentance and fruitfulness?
7. What encouragement do you find in this passage?

Witness (and during the week) (10 mins)

Focus on The Lord's Prayer, especially those verses which link in to our texts:- **Your Kingdom Come. For yours is the Kingdom the power and the glory**

Say the Lord's Prayer together slowly, pausing as you reach those sections for everyone to reflect silently on them in the light of what they may have seen afresh in this study.

Pray for conversations which will lead to opportunities to invite people to services, groups or other occasions as we prepare through Lent for Easter. Pray for and encourage those with whom you have already spoken.

O Lord, the clouds are gathering

The fire of judgment burns
How we have fallen!
O Lord, you stand appalled to see
Your laws of love so scorned
And lives so broken

Have mercy, Lord,
Have mercy, Lord, (Echo)
Forgive us, Lord,
Forgive us, Lord (Echo)
Restore us, Lord (All)
Revive your church again
Let justice flow
Let justice flow (Echo)
Like rivers
Like rivers (Echo)
And righteousness like a never failing stream (All)

O Lord, over the nations now
Where is the dove of peace?
Her wings are broken
O Lord, while precious children starve
The tools of war increase
Their bread is stolen

Have mercy....

O Lord, dark powers are poised to flood
Our streets with hate and fear
We must awaken!
O Lord, let love reclaim the lives
That sin would sweep away
And let your kingdom come

Have mercy..

Yet, O Lord, your glorious cross shall tower
Triumphant in this land
Evil confounding
Through the fire your suffering church display
The glories of her Christ
Praises resounding!

Have mercy...

Leaders' Supplementary Notes on Luke 13 : 1-9

Repent or You Too Will Perish (13:1-5)

Who needs mercy? Just great sinners? Jesus here speaks to that question.

Jesus refers to contemporary events in Palestine that haven't found their way into the history books:

1. Pilate has killed some worshippers from Galilee who, presumably, have come to the temple to worship. This is in keeping with his reputation
2. A tower, probably near the pool of Siloam, has collapsed and the falling stones have instantly killed eighteen people.

The normal Jewish reaction would be to assume that those who experience tragedies must have sinned greatly to deserve such terrible deaths. Calamity was a punishment for sin (cf. Job 4:7; 8:20; 22:4-5; John 9:1-2).

But Jesus says that not just "bad" people will suffer judgment, but everyone needs to repent.

Cf Mtt 3 7-10 John the Baptist's call to repentance and other verses see notes on Good Fruit below.

The Barren Fig Tree (13:6-9)

This section on repentance and judgment concludes with a final parable, the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree:

A man looks for fruit on his fig tree for three years straight, and doesn't find any. "Cut it down," he tells the gardener. "It's just wasting space in my garden."

But the gardener isn't quite ready to give up on it. Cultivation and more fertilizer, he prescribes. Loosen the soil around the roots to let air in. One more year. And then if it doesn't do anything, then if it doesn't bear any fruit, then cut it down.

What does it mean? The fig tree probably refers to Israel -- not that fig trees in Scripture always refer to Israel (Hosea 9:10; Jeremiah

8:13; 24:1-8; Micah 7:1), but that it fits the context of other of Jesus' sayings about Israel (Luke 20:9-16). This is a parable of mercy. The tree deserves to be cut down, but the gardener still has hope for it. He wants to give it one more chance. Perhaps he represents Jesus as an advocate to God for undeserving Israel.

Good Fruit

But the parable also talks about any individual whose life does not bear good fruit. Seeking fruit, good fruit, is one of the themes of John the Baptist's and Jesus' teachings:

"Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." (Luke 3:8-9)

"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them." (Matthew 7:19-20)

"Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit." (Matthew 12:33)

"But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop." (Luke 8:15)

"At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed." (Luke 20:10)

"Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit." (Matthew 21:43)

"He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful." (John 15:2)

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit -- fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." (John 15:16)

What is the fruit? Souls won to Christ? good deeds (Matthew 7:20)? the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:19-23)?

We are not saved BY our fruitfulness, but FOR fruitfulness (Ephesians 2:8-10). But as disciples of Christ we should see evidence of Christ and his Spirit working in our lives (Romans 8:9-17). People who meet and decide to follow him change. They repent -- experience a "change of mind." And a change of heart. They change from going in one direction to going another.

The teaching in this passage is unquestionably hard, and should give an urgency to the Gospel message we have to share.

We have a dual message of hope and of judgment, of love and of justice. To be faithful to our Lord we must proclaim both to our generation, and not neglect one theme or the other.

"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare." (2 Peter 3:9-10)

Extracted and adapted with additions from

http://www.jesuswalk.com/lessons/12_49-13_9.htm