**3/20/22**

**Repent, The Fig Tree, & Grace**

**Luke 13:1-9**

I am going to start things off this morning with a bit of a professional disclaimer. Writing a sermon is not easy. It requires time and continued research. It requires adding things, scrapping things, and even considering an alternative to what you just typed. There is a lot of weight on the shoulders of me as the presenter. As, what I share with you up here and on the conference call, in just a few minutes can be beneficial, or it can totally wreck your thoughts and perspective and beliefs. I pray and hope that what I prepared for you today after several hours of research and break-down indeed helps you and does not hurt you. Furthermore, I realize I am blessed to be sharing with you today due to the unfortunate circumstance that Pastor was admitted to the hospital yesterday. So, I pray with you for her continued healing and strength.

Now let’s get into the proverbial meat and potatoes of today’s Gospel Lesson, as I am going to try my best to help us all understand and draw some kind of connection with it. At first glance it may not seem that the two parts of the story even connect at all, but I am here to tell you that it is indeed two stories tucked into one. The stories are relational, and extremely purposeful. They are meant for us to think about our daily journey, struggles, and our current focus of our march this Lenten season on the way to the cross with Jesus. The stories are also meant for us to think in an alternative way, and realize how spectacular of an opportunity we have because Jesus took our burdens off of our shoulders and just did not give up on us ornamental or failing fig trees. He continues to give us more and more chances to turn towards him and repent and to be able to blossom and bear fruit. He did this by taking your and my place on the cross.

Now I know you still may be sitting there shaking your head, or asking how exactly does any of this line up together Vince. I remind you Jesus taught in parables to help us have some imagery, and be able to better understand or relate to things. However, we can’t get so focused on the exact details that we lose the entire message. Stop thinking if you ever even ate a fig, or if you even like figs or not. More so, stop thinking if you forgot to give something up to God when you were recounting your sins. He knows your every action and misdoing, and just asks that you hold yourself accountable by coming to Him in the first place.

Let’s take this chance we have together here this morning to break things down in order to gain a little more insight into what the Gospel writer and Jesus were getting at. We hear twice in the first part of the Gospel Lesson, “No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.” Then, in the second part of the Gospel Lesson we hear, “For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down!” Both statements are very definitive and precise. They both get to the point of there being no action and no result, and that a life should be ended. Honestly, that is a bit scary to me, and I am sure it is to you as well. Thankfully, we do not live in a world without God, or the gift of Grace that He provided us with.

Yes, ‘Repent or perish’ is not something we may be comfortable with hearing. We often recognize or admit that we sin daily or often, even if we try our hardest not to. Unfortunately, it is part of our human nature. The dangerous part though can be to think we can live a life good enough to make God happy. Remember that sins are committed not only with actions, but with words and even thoughts. Even more so, there is no scale or weights and balances system with sin. God’s word reminds us that all sins are equal. God sees sin as sin, no matter how we may try to rate them.

In the midst of our daily sinning we are afforded the opportunity to repent. Repent means to turn. When the believer sees their sin and turns from it there is only one place to turn, and that is toward God. We cannot turn in two directions at once. As we turn from our sins and repent we turn to God and celebrate our time of grace on earth. In Acts 3 verse 19 we get to hear, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord."

In the Lutheran Church we start our Worship Service with something called the Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness. We may just say it and go through the motions, and not realize the importance of it. How we manage to recite these words, is also a way in which we have to feel them in our hearts too. When you take your bulletin home, or look at it on the computer or your device, examine it a little more closely. The words change a bit every season in the church, but they have the same distinct meaning and purpose. It is our chance each week to give our wrongdoings and errors up to God, and get them off of our shoulders at the very beginning of our time together each Worship Service. We get the chance to do it together as a community!

Okay, Okay Vince I think I get it now, but what about that fig tree? I haven’t heard you talk about it anymore. How do these stories exactly relate again?

The purpose of the fig tree was to produce fruit. It had no other purpose for existing. It wasn’t there to look pretty and say, look at me, it was there to be productive and purposeful. As we need food for strength and survival, we need spiritual food for growth and strength in our daily walk with the Lord. So, this tree was planted to bear fruit. The owner came looking for fruit. The tree was barren – fruitless! The owner had patiently waited to find fruit. If the tree was not going to bear fruit it was wasting space and should be cut down. The gardener interceded asking for another year, one last chance, a grace period for the tree. Unfortunately, the parable does not tell us the result of the one-year grace period given to the fig tree. But we know the alternatives it faced, as well as the alternatives we face.

The fig tree is you and me. We were planted where we are planted by God. We are given a time to grow physically, mentally, and spiritually. And if we mess up it is God’s divine grace that continues to come back and save us, just like the gardener. Believers in Jesus Christ have been planted by Jesus Christ into the body of Christ and as such share in the same nurturing from God.

As believers, saved by grace, we are privileged and blessed to be able to live each day as the last day of our time of grace. We look forward to our Lord’s return. We are not scared but pray thy kingdom come. We have come to know and believe, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, that our salvation does not depend on us, our works or anything else. Our eternal salvation only depends completely and solely on the redemptive work of our blessed Savior, Jesus Christ. The time of grace is limited, but God’s grace and forgiveness is limitless! So we really need to ask ourselves, “Am I living in my grace period?” And, if we are, I hope that we will see our need and be motivated by God’s Spirit to allow Him to work in us to make us what we ought to be.

AMEN

References:

Are You Living In Your Grace Period?

Contributed by Jerry Flury on Mar 10, 2002 (message contributor)

Scripture: Luke 13:1-9

Denomination: Baptist

Repent Or Perish

Contributed by [Tim Meyer](https://sermoncentral.com/contributors/timm-meyer-profile-7514) on Mar 25, 2006 [(message contributor)](https://sermoncentral.com/contributors/timm-meyer-profile-7514)

Scripture: [Luke 13:1-9](https://sermoncentral.com/sermons/scripture/sermons-on-luke-13-1-9?keyword=Luke+13%3A1-9)

Denomination: [Lutheran](https://sermoncentral.com/sermons/search/?checkedDenominations=lutheran)

Grace Revolution

Joseph Prince