

Luke 12:41-59

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[0 : 00] Last couple of weeks or so, many of us have been watching your television news programmes, reading your papers, and really doing it with horror. Seeing the great devastation caused by storms in different parts of the world, storms like Germany, Harvey and Irma, mainly across the Caribbean, Texas and Florida, and monsoon in India, Bangladesh and Nepal, causing great devastation.

Loss of life in every place. And the right was how the monsoons hit Southeast Asia, at least every year between June and September.

The 2017 monsoon was said to have been the worst for many decades. The farmland is ruined, so that leads to crop failures, long-term food shortages, real difficulties.

Over 1,200 people have been confirmed as dead. More than 45 million people affected towards the end of August. On the other side of the world, the Atlantic hurricane season runs from the middle of August to October.

According to statistics, it reached its peak on the 10th of September, many years. That's according to last Sunday.

[1 : 27] And we read there of many casualties during these great phenomena, natural phenomena. And we may well ask what was being asked in chapter 13 there of Luke's Gospel.

Were those killed greater sinners and more discerning of losing their lives than others? What did Jesus say?

Well, I think he would say, not at all. As he says here. That's the sort of question people came to Jesus with in Luke 13. Now there were some present at the time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood pilot had mixed with their sacrifices.

Jesus answered, do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered in this way? And do you suppose that the 2,749 people who died in the Twin Towers in what they call 9-11 were worse sinners than all other Americans living in New York at that time or whatever nation they came from?

Well, of course not. Of course not. But presumably, each one who met their death at that moment had an opportunity to repent of their sins.

[2 : 55] Which is what the parable here is ultimately about. I read an article from the Gospel Coalition. An article by a man called Greg Lanier.

He's the assistant professor of New Testament Reformed Theology Seminary in Orlando. And in his early days he had received some feedback for his preaching.

And the feedback went like this. You need to tell more stories when you preach. People like to hear stories. Jesus told parables so that even kids could understand. Is that what a parable is about?

And that's what he asks. Is it really true Jesus told parables so that it would be more easily understood? And he mentions the Bible in parable of the soul in that article.

And he says this. Famously, in this parable described as a key to understanding all the rights Jesus seems to say. He speaks in parables. Not so that he would be more easily understood.

[4 : 03] But precisely so that his hearers will not hear or understand. Lest they repent and be forgiven. You see, the Lord himself has to open ears.

Where I am ministering in the northeast of Scotland. Certain people are at the point of death. Or the death of a loved one. Certain people will hold on to any hope or conversion of the person who has died.

People who have never seemingly had a close relationship with the Lord. And it is hoped that at the very last moment they made a profession of faith.

Now I know that's not impossible. It's not impossible with the Lord. But how foolish it is to leave it to that final moment of life to make that profession of faith.

The first verses we read in Luke chapter 13 here. Prior to the telling of the parable. It is very interesting indeed. And it starts speaking about the Galileans.

[5 : 07] Whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. What was that all about? What were they speaking of? Now although we have no information in the scriptures about that incident.

It started here about the time when Pilate was improving Jerusalem's water supply. And the problem was that he was financing it. Not with government money.

Not with the Roman money. But with money raised in the temple. While it was good to give the people a decent water supply. As it is all over the world.

The idea of using the temple money for it was not. And soldiers. And soldiers. The cause arrived. And soldiers were called. To disperse the crowds.

Because of the violence. At that time. And it's thought that Galileans were in Jerusalem. And Galileans were normally seen as people who had a hot temper.

[6 : 02] And they were likely to have got involved. But look at how Jesus answered. As he often did. With a choice to. Do you think that these Galileans.

Who caused a riot. And there were more than a riot. Were worse sinners than all the other Galileans. Because they suffered in this way. Because they died. I tell you no.

But unless you repent. These turn the question around. But unless you repent. You too will all perish. And Jesus went on to quote another incident here.

Which also happened in the city. And he says about that in verse 4. Those 18 who died from the church. I long fell on them. Do you think that they were more guilty.

As it says in the alt-lized version. Were sinners. Than all the others. They were in Jerusalem. I tell you no. And then he comes. But unless you repent.

[7 : 06] You too. Will all perish. The town of Siloam. Fell and making others refer to here. In the new international version.

As being more guilty. In the King James version. As worse sinners. So what do we have here. Well according to Professor Barclay. He was a professor of New Testament.

In Glasgow University. He was good in historical knowledge. Maybe he wasn't quite so good in theology. But his historical knowledge was pretty good. And it says. He says.

He says that. It has been suggested. That they had actually taken work. On Pilate's hated aqueducts. If so. Any money they earned. Was due to God.

And should have been. Voluntarily handed over. Because it had already been stolen from him. And it may well be. That the popular talk. Had declared that the tower had fallen.

- [8 : 02] On him because. Of the work they had consented to do. But Jesus says. No. So if people were asking the question.
- Probably because of their own traditional thinking. Because we learn the Gospels. That Jews associated suffering with sinfulness.
- That belief is found. Very clearly. In the account of a man born blind. John 9. John 9. One says. As he went along. He saw a man blind from birth.
- His disciples asked him. Rabbi. Who sinned this man nor his parents? Then he was born blind. And Jesus replied. Neither this man nor his parents sinned.
- But this happened. So that the work of God. Might be displayed in his life. You see. Good things can promote the tragedies.
- [9 : 00] In the Lord's will of purposes. The people of God as we know. Not only from scripture. But from our own experiences.
- Are not immune from suffering. We had four. We had four. Can I call them young people. Who are under 60. In their own congregation.
- In the past year. Suffering from cancer. Good people. People who love the Lord. You wonder.
- You wonder why. People get these diseases. But they do. Because we. As believers. Are not immune. From suffering.
- Think of Job. One of the earliest books. In the Bible. In the Old Testament. Eliphaz asks there. Consider now. Who being innocent. As ever perished.
- [9 : 57] Where will the upright hell destroy. You see. This is Jewish thought again. As I have observed. Those who plough evil. And those who sow. Trouble reap it. Right down to the present day.
- People. Are being. Persecuted. And some. Mercilessly. For their faith. I don't know. If you're aware. Of a lady called. Asi Abibi.
- Imprisoned in Pakistan. Since 2009. A peasant lady. Why was she imprisoned? For not. Renouncing. Jesus Christ. As her Lord.
- She's a Roman Catholic. But she says. Jesus. Is her saviour. And she's imprisoned. Threatened with death. And her family is here. Occasionally. She's been at death's door.
- A few times in the prison. There are others there. There's a Sudanese. Church leader. And another. Graduate with him. Who. At the beginning of.
- [10 : 57] 2017. This year. Who were imprisoned. For 12 years. What was their crime? For supposedly. Aiding and abetting.
- A check worker. Who was accused of spying. Because of Christians. Jesus. Jesus denied. That these hard things. Were happening. Because.
- Of. Pershing sin. And he had just been. The thinking of those. Who asked the question. Do you think. That these Galileans. Were more sinners. Than all the other Galileans. Because they suffered.
- In this way. And he went on. To repeat. What he. What he had said. Earlier. The verse. He had told you no. But unless you repent. You too. Will all perish.
- Now some understand. That. That. That phrase. That sentence. That you. You too. Will all perish. To a reference. To what was going to come.
- [11 : 53] In 1870. When the Jerusalem. When the Jerusalem temple. Was destroyed. By the Romans. After all. Jesus. Knew.
- And knows. All things. Including the future. Whether or not. It still. Calls. For individual.

Repentance. Luke 21. It says. Let those. Who are in Judea. Free to the mountains. Let those. In the city. Get out. Let those. In the country. Not enter the city.

For this. Is a time. Of punishment. And fulfilment. Of all that has been written. How dreadful. It will be. In these days. For pregnant women. And nursing mothers. There will be. Great distress in the land.

And wrath against the people. They will fall. By the sword. And be taken. As prisoners. To all the nations. Jerusalem. Will be trampled on. By the Gentiles. Until the times. Of the Gentiles.

[12 : 47] Have been fulfilled. And I think. I believe. That we are in these times. Now. The times. Of the Gentiles. Being fulfilled. As the Jews. Have called back.

To reestablish. That nation. Again. When I think. Of these pressures. I can't help.

But think. Of all that's been happening. In recent years. In Syria. With the Christians. Especially. With some. Yezidis. And there's Kurds. And there's other groups.

Who have suffered. Mercilessly. At the hands of IS. Islamic State. And I'm sure. You've prayed. For the situation.

In the city. And other places. Here. As we have done. In Gardnerstone. Maybe you've. You've been able to help. Through organisations. We're working there. At Barnabas Fund. And Open Doors.

[13 : 41] That we've. We've tried to help. In Gardnerstone. Christians. Fleeing from their homes. Christians. Becoming refugees. And I saw a picture. We had a missionary.

In the church. A few weeks ago. I saw a picture. Of a refugee camp. In Jordan. There's over a million people. In refugee camps. In tents. In Jordan.

Lied up on streets. Terrible situation. And Jewish people. Living during. The early days. Of the gospel. Come across.

As being very. Earthly minded. They were rooted to the earth. They were. They weren't. Very spiritual at all. And maybe that's not so different. To many people. In their own day.

In their own generations. Including the Jewish people. They were rejecting. The nation. Or kingdom. Of God. At every turn.

[14 : 37] And they were rejecting it. There would only be one end for them. Eternal death. But to open it further. Jesus was gone. To tell a parable.

Then he told this parable. Verse 6. A man of victory. Planted in his vineyard. And he went and looked for fruit in it. But did not find any.

Now the sentiment here is a little different. From that we might take when a tree is planted. To bear fruit.

But didn't yield any. Now I have no experience of this. But one commenter said that fruit trees of various kinds were planted among the vines.

And this was done when the winemaker looked for a subtle addition to the flavour. Such as apple or in this case fig.

[15 : 37] In the wine. I don't know if that's right or not. But that's what more comments they're saying. Saying that there was common knowledge that wine carried its bouquet and tastes a hint, a subtle bouquet to its neighbouring plants.

And plants used that same soil prior to the vine. The vineyard owner had every right to expect fruit after three years.

The fig tree had plenty of leaves here but bore no fruit. One commentator said this was the leaves of empty profession. The leaves of empty profession.

At that time, at the time of Jesus, the fig tree represented the people, the nation of Israel. Israel by and large had been away from God for centuries.

We remember from the time of Malachi to the coming of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Christ. There was silence from heaven. There was silence from heaven in our day and generation.

[16 : 53] Over the centuries prior to that, Israel, we might say, had been cultivated. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, through the priests and the prophets of the Old Testament.

Through Moses, through the law. And the New Testament says that the Holy Spirit was at work in the days of Jesus. Through the ministries of Jesus himself. Through the ministry of John the Baptist.

Convicting and converting souls. Through the ministry of Jesus. Through the ministry of God. But Israel, in Maine, lacked the real, true fruit of an inward, godly character.

It only had the leaves of outward appearance. Things went on as normal in the temple. At the specific times of the spring festival.

At the organ festivals. What were in God's eyes? The priests. The passage speaks of three years of rooting for fruit.

[18 : 02] But the tree would have been much older than that, experts say. If we go back to the book of Leviticus in chapter 19. We find there that the garden didn't expect fruit for himself for seven years.

Oh, for five years. When you enter the land and plant any kind of fruit tree. The garden fruit as forbidden. For three years.

You have to consider it forbidden. It must not be eaten. In the fourth year. All its fruit will be holy. An offering of praise to the Lord. And in the fifth year.

You may eat of the fruit. In this way your harvest will be increased. I am the Lord his God. So this is. The people who are growing this fruit.

Were expected to give the first crop to the Lord. How many of us have given our first wage to the Lord? Well, maybe some have. An offering of praise to God for his goodness.

[19 : 06] Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard. Verse 7. For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit.

On this fig tree. And haven't found any cut down. Why should it use up the soil? The fig tree. The fig tree. The fig tree. This parable had not been. Had not given fruit for three years.

So the owner wanted the gardener. To cut it down. According to the laws. The owner would have waited. Seven years in total. And he had been tired of waiting.

He had been tired of waiting. He wanted to cut it down. So he could plant another tree. Three which in time would be a fruit. Cut it down.

Why should it use up the soil? Should the question sometimes being asked. Why do people die in clashing and meaningless circumstances.

[20 : 07] As I mentioned in the beginning. Should it not rather be. Why has God kept me here until this time? Why has God not taken my life away before?

Especially if it's when I'm fruitful. And they were asking Jesus. Why? Why? Did these people die?

I have heard more often. People say to me. Especially when I'm getting on in years. And maybe getting less able. I'm just not bothered to my family.

Why does the Lord just take me? I remember my own granny. Disabled. In bed. Praying.

I remember praying. Lord. Take me home with yourself. Take me home. She felt. Her work here was done.

[21 : 12] But it wasn't. Because she was still ministering to others. Why does God keep me alive? Will he keep us alive until the moment.

That he wants us to return. And our ministry here. Is over. I was asked last week. By. A lady in her own congregation.

She's doing nothing well lately. She has connections with the Simon. Way back. Way back. I think her grandfather was from this island. She asked me.

I don't know why I'm here. I don't know why I'm here. The Catholic still witnesses. And she will do until late.

Until the day. God has a work here finished. Perhaps it's worth asking. Of ourselves. Am I any use to the creator?

[22 : 15] Am I giving fruit? Am I feeding others? Isn't that a thought? Am I feeding others? In our community?

Why should the keeper of the vineyard. Plead. To give us a chance. To show fruit. By cultivating it.

Cultivating it for one more year. As Jesus is in the saving for someone in here. Just give him. Give her another opportunity. And then if they don't bear fruit.

Cut him. Cut her out. Why did the keeper of the vines plead for you and I. At the time.

Up to when we were saved. But to give us an opportunity. To come and bear fruit for him. Perhaps Jesus is pleading for you this morning.

[23 : 16] Here right here in this place. Interceding to the father. That he might respond to his call. To go and bear fruit for him. I just heard a story of.

A missionary. He was working in Tunisia many years ago. And I recently came home. After a life-term ministry in Tunisia. And he says.

That his ministry. Was of little use. He only saw. One convert. In 40 years of ministry. And that convert.

Once he was converted. He was a Jew. He went to live in Israel. And he felt that he was really disappointed. But what happened was. That that Jew who was converted.

Started the first. Messianic church. He started. In Jerusalem. He started a publishing house. Putting Arab. English. And Hebrew books.

[24 : 22] And he's giving away the Hebrew books. To the Jewish people. Christian. Hebrew. Books in Hebrew. His son continues ministry today. And that.

He died last. Last year. And the ministry continues. Out of that one. Passion. Came to faith. In Tunisia. Had great words.

And started. Look at Billy Graham. Came into a meeting. Just like this. Sat at the back. Heard the gospel. The man was preaching. The bandit.

Who a preacher. But it's not enough. To touch with Graham. One commenter said.

That in this case. He is not speaking to believers. Bearing the fruit of the spirit. But unbelievers. Who should bear fruit. Worthy of repentance. Nevertheless.

[25 : 19] We can also take this. To our own heart. Jesus began preaching. For repentance. To history of Matthew 4. And 17. Says. From that time on. Jesus began to preach.

Repent. For the kingdom of heaven. Is near. John the Baptist. Preached the same. Similar message. The axes are ready. At the root of the trees. And every tree. That does not produce good fruit.

Will be cut down. And thrown into the fire. Still. Israel as a whole. Did not repent. They as a people.

Rejected the Messiah. They rejected his message. And Jesus. He cried out to the Lord. Before. He gave up the ghost. Father.

I want to forgive them. For they know not. What they do. What are you. What are me. What is God doing with us.

[26 : 17] Have we shown the fruit. Of the Holy Spirit. In our lives. Today. In our communities. Is he going to let us. Continue to take up space.

On this. In this earth of ours. Or earth of his. So. Any serious matter. Any serious matter. For all of us.

As Christians. As followers of Jesus. We need to live for Christ. In every single area. Of our lives. There is.

There is. There is. There is no part of our lives. There is no part of. There is no part of our lives. But praise God. Oh praise him.

That this is the God. Of the second chance. and the 82nd chance and the 100nd second chance. And he's maybe given us many opportunities to come to the place where he wants us to be.

[27 : 21] God has every right to cut down the Christian that does not bear fruit for him like the owner here in the parable of victory. Jesus says to the Father Sir leave it alone for one more year give him another opportunity to bear fruit.

And in his gracious mercy he spares us for a season. Undescendable change must be seen in the life of the one who claims to trust in the Messiah because if there's no visible change in that person it's a fig tree fig tree as it were they may be leaves but there's no fruit so the man replied leave it alone for one more year I'll dig around it and I can fertilise it there's fruit next year fine but if not then cut it down.

This paragraph told by Jesus here points to the fact that although God is patient and forgiving with humanity a continual refusal to repent and turn from a wicked way spell and certain doom there's no there's no more issue more out than repentance because the inevitable has been cut down the inevitable judgment and I believe that God through through thinking about this and having it again is giving us another opportunity a further opportunity to go and bear fruit for him to win souls for the last day Jesus was ministering for three years did he see much fruit among his father's chosen people Israel no he didn't cut them down immediately but he warned them and he waited for 40 years from 1830 where was the time when Jesus died to 1870 when the temple was razed to the ground he allowed the Roman hours to destroy dispense all the people from Jerusalem they hid all over the place many were killed and where was the beautiful temple now this place the price to which time in fact

I'm looking Monday it is I'm taking a group of 30 people to Israel and we'll see these very stones that have fallen in 1870 they're still there on the south side of the city maybe we're not going to see the fellowship of God's people disappear in our lifetime but if we in this generation continue to bear continue to bear no fruit then what is going to happen in the days to come the time we welcome that there will be little witness left on this island if we do not go and bear fruit think of the nation of Turkey today and some of you may have been in Turkey on holiday it's an Islamic country secular Islamic whatever you want to call it this is where Paul ministered this is where Paul went around the churches this is where

Paul sent churches this is where John spoke to from the Isle of Pappas to the churches churches we find in Revelation 2 and 3 where is the witness there today precious precious little of me precious little of me the gospel witness what do you find in these places there's tours going round the churches of Revelation what do you find it rags of what was once points where Christians were being born again later in this chapter as Jesus approached Jerusalem you know the story Jesus went over the city and people who loved oh Jerusalem Jerusalem you killed the prophets and stole those who sent you how long how often how you long to gather your children together as a hen gals with chicks on their wings but you were not willing can you sense the heart of

[32 : 13] Jesus for his people you were not willing he says I wanted to give you my all in fact he won't give us all look your house has left you desolate I tell you you will not see me again until you say blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord is Jesus weeping over us today is Jesus weeping over this nation is Jesus weeping over the nation we call the land of the book at one time in our history is he longing to see people coming to him again in repentance over sin we have daily opportunities God given opportunities to go and be soft and light in the world let's not receive God's free grace in vain 2 Corinthians 6 says in the time of my favour

I heard you in the day of my salvation I helped you I tell you now is the day of God's favour now is the day of salvation we are in days of opportunity still God is merciful he gives people time to repent God is also just and he will bring judgment the parable makes it clear that there is a final chance a last chance if we refuse opportunity after opportunity the day eventually comes and God checks us out and it's by deliberate choice that we cut ourselves off from him let's pray with David this prayer from our hearts search me oh God and know my heart test me and know my anxious thoughts see if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way of last when we live after life of

Christ he is able to do wonderful and glorious things in our midst but only when we live our lives with him may God be with us may God see fruit in this island again through the faithfulness of individuals of the gospel and of sharing with others the wonders of his grace amen let's pray