

Fruitless Fig Tree

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Date: 31 July 2016

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[0 : 00] In Luke chapter 13, we read, state also this parable, verse 6. A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sawed fruit thereon, and found none.

And said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none. And cut it down, wide cometh it the ground? But he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it.

And if it bear fruit well, and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. In this parable which Jesus tells, there is the master of the vineyard who has planted a fig tree, not a vine of the stage.

The vine is also, no doubt, filling up the vineyard. That's why the vineyard will have been prepared. But he has planted this fig tree within the confines of his vineyard.

He hasn't just planted it out in the open field. He hasn't just put it in a hillside, in a boulder-stew area. He has taken the piece of ground which is already prepared by probably years of work before.

[1 : 13] And I've talked about this in the past. A vineyard is not an easy thing to prepare. It takes an awful lot of work. The Lord uses the vineyard as an illustration of his relationship to his people.

If we turn to Isaiah 5 that we've looked at often in the past. I will sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill.

And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein. And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard, what could have been done more to my vineyard than I have not done in it?

Wherefore, when I looked at it, it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes. The Lord uses, through the prophets, the illustration of the vineyard as an illustration of his relationship with his people.

[2 : 17] He has worked at them. He has prepared the ground for them. He has gathered out the stones. He has given them the land that he promised them. He prepared them in Egypt, and then when the iniquity of the Amorites was full, he cleared away those stones.

He brought them in. He planted them in that very fruitful hill. And he looked that they should bring forth fruit. They should bring forth grapes, and they brought forth wild grapes.

But here in this illustration, we have the master planting, not so much his vineyard. That's already there. But a fig tree. A fig tree also, as we were looking at in previous occasions, could be taken as symbolic of the people of Israel.

How Jesus, remember when he found no fruit on the fig tree there, he cursed it, and it withered up from the roots. But here we have this instance. A certain man in a fig tree planted in his vineyard.

So he chose an area of ground which was already cleared. An area of ground that was already fenced in. When already he had planted his vines, he already had fruitful plants, no doubt, in it.

[3 : 31] Which from year to year would have brought forth a certain amount of grapes. But here, because he knew the ground was good. And when he knew the ground was prepared. And when he knew the amount of work that had gone into it already.

Suddenly, he planted this fig tree. And he looked that it should bring forth fruit. And he found none. So he said to the address of his vineyard, behold these three years.

I come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Now I don't think we should get hung up on the point about the three years. Three years is probably simply given because it's considered a reasonable amount of time in which one should begin to see a certain amount of fruitfulness from a fig tree.

Once it's been planted there in the fruitful soil. First year, okay, fair enough. Perhaps starting second year, maybe you just not had a good providence. Or a bad season or whatever. Third year, there ought to be something. And there's still nothing to think. So obviously, a bad instance, right? Pull it out, cut it down. There's no point at cumbering the ground.

[4 : 40] Now, why cumbereth it the ground? It's not just, in other words, it's not just taking up space. But it's also soaking up nutrients from the soil.

It's detracting from what is available to the vines, to the vineyard. And what is there? So it's actually having a negative effect on the ground.

And it's not even bringing forth any fruit. What's the point of having it there? Why cumbereth it the ground? But this is the situation where the lord of the vineyard has with the fig tree.

Now, the illustrations should be clear enough. But you've got the pleading here of the dresser of the vineyard. He says, well, just leave it one more year. Let it alone this year also.

I'll dig about it. And I'll manure it. And I'll give it a wee bit of extra attention. We'll loosen up the earth. We'll turn the soil. We'll put in fertilizer there. And then if still it bears nothing, well, okay.

[5 : 37] Fair enough. In other words, it's going to have another year. And we can say, well, that means four years instead of three. Again, we shouldn't get hung up on the number of years. And some people have tried to say, oh, well, three years.

That corresponds to the roughly three years of Jesus' ministry. Okay, maybe stretching things a wee bit. That's not, I think, what's intended here. It's not meant to be as specific numerically as that. It's a fixed but adequate portion of time. A fixed but adequate portion of time in which, if there was going to be fruit, there ought to have been fruit by now.

But notice we have this interceding here by the dresser of the vineyard. Give it another year. Now, when he gives it another year, it's adding effectively another third again.

Three years and he's getting another year. So in the total amount of time, he's had an extra 25%. In the four years total, that extra year was bought for it by the intercessions of the dresser of the vineyard.

[6 : 46] His pleading has gained it a whole quarter of its potential life. And perhaps gained it even more life if it actually bears fruits. But without the intercession of the vine dresser, it wouldn't be surviving at all.

I'll think about it. I'll dung it. And if it bear fruit, well, and if not, then after that, we shall cut it down. The master of the vineyard is looking for fruit.

That is why he has planted the fig tree in the first place. It's not because he likes the look of fig trees. It's not because they look so blossoming and pretty. He's got this wee bit of extra space in his vineyard.

So let's just plant a fruit in it. No, he wants fruit. He expects fruit. That's why he chose to put it in this piece of ground. Now I know we can stretch points.

And I know we can make illustrations sometimes. Say things that maybe it wasn't intended to be original. But if the word of God is applicable in every age.

[7 : 49] If this is applicable to Jesus' original healers, to the disciples and to those who gather around it, then you can bet your bottom dollar it's applicable to us too.

It is intended for us likewise. The Lord of the vineyard can be none other but the Lord himself. None other but God.

Here he has already prepared ground. Ground that has already been worked at. If we take, logically enough, the illustration of the vineyard as being, in the first instance, the people of Israel.

Isaiah finally just quoted it from him. And again, the reason that he plants a vineyard is for fruitfulness for it. Ezekiel tells us, of course, chapter 15 in Ezekiel says, You know, son of man, what is the vine tree more than any tree, than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereof? And if you think about it, you know, you buy grapes in the supermarket or whatever. That's the fruit of the vine.

[9 : 00] And if you take them out there packing and you look at all the tiny wee twigly branches that their grapes are on, you pull them off as you eat them. Look at these twigly wee branches.

That's the strength of the wood on a vine. Okay, the branches in which the bunch of their grapes are slightly thicker, slightly stronger. But it's not like wood you can fashion or carve anything out of.

You can't even really chop it up for firewood or for kindling or anything other than to produce grapes. It is useless. It is not fit for any purpose.

You know, the wood. What is the vine tree more than any tree? Or that branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereof?

It's weak. It's twig-like. It's easily broken. It's so fragile. It has no purpose as wood. It has lots of purpose if it's going to bear fruit.

[9 : 55] That's why the Lord plants his vineyard in the first place, to bear fruit. Jesus said in John's account of the gospel, I am the vine. My father is the husband, the dresser of the vineyard.

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away. And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you're clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Notice how Christ's own word is part of what cleans, what gives us life, what makes us whole. Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me.

Think of the grapes you might buy in your supermarket again. Go back to that illustration. Now, suppose you were wandering through the vineyard. When they were just beginning to get wee, and just little bug-like, they hadn't become the full luscious fruit that they were going to become.

When there's still wee, hard, buggy kind of blossoms there. If you broke off a branch of the vine, you say, well that's fine, I'll just take it home. I'll stick it in the earth, in my own garden there, and I'll watch the grapes grow.

[11 : 09] Nothing is going to happen. It's just going to wither and die there, because now it's separated from the vine. It won't grow, it won't blossom, it won't produce any more fruit, except it abides in the vine.

He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. For without me, you can do nothing. This is what Jesus said, without me, you can do nothing.

If we are to bear fruit, whether it's vine, whether it's fruit tree, whatever, we will not do it, except we abide in Christ. Now, if we abide in Christ and we begin to bring forth fruit, then the Lord says that every branch that beareth fruit, he purges it.

Now, that means prunes it, cuts it back. Once the fruit's off it, he cuts it back. And every branch that doesn't bear fruit, he cuts it and takes it away. Now, the difference between being purged, in other words, cut down, pruned, and the difference between cut away altogether, might not look like an awful lot of difference from the outside.

We might think, oh, God is smiting that person. He must be really cross with them. He must be judging them for something they've done. He's cutting them down. They must have displeased the Lord in some way.

[12 : 31] Think about the man born blind. And how they decide to say, Lord, who sinned? This man or his parents, that he was born blind. Why are these bad things happening to this good man, Job? Is he being smitten because he's a sinner?

And all his three friends said, yes, he must have done something bad. To the outside world, it is difficult often to tell the difference between what is God's purging because we are bearing fruit. What is the pruning, the cutting back of the fruitful branch so that it will be more fruit? And what is the actual cutting away to take away the branch altogether?

And we might say, only time will tell. Only time will prove the difference. But the Lord knows what he is doing and the Lord knows who and what is bearing fruit.

There is a point here also about the time factor. However, Jesus is talking at the beginning of the chapter. They were present at that season. Some had told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

[13 : 34] Now, the likelihood here is that this was some political revolt. Galilee was a hotbed of sedition as far as the Romans were concerned. There had been those, you know, in the Acts of the Apostles.

I remember how Gamaliel talks about, you know, Judas of Galilee or whatever that took so many hundred men with him. And then he was killed and his followers were scattered. And there were those who perhaps, as Galileans were coming to Jerusalem, perhaps intending to start a revolt.

And they were dedicating themselves at the temple probably. And Pilate, having crushed the rebellion, there was shed so much blood that the blood mingled with the sacrifices. With the blood of the sacrifices.

Now, this would be a particularly bloodthirsty and savage repression, which would be bordering on sacrilege as well when Pilate did it in the confines of the temple.

And Jesus said, do you think these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things? In other words, it's God smiting them because they're really bad. There's no, not necessarily.

[14 : 41] But except you repent, you'll all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay, but except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.

What does he mean by that? He means that they are neither better nor worse than everybody else. This didn't happen to them because they were bad people. The others that escaped didn't escape because they were good people.

This just proved to be in providence God's time. This was the number of their days fulfilled. This was when their days came to an end. And they didn't expect it.

And they didn't know it. And they didn't plan for it. And it seems like a tragedy. And it seems so unfair in many ways. It is a tragedy. Why should it happen to those people? Why should it be them and not somebody else?

But it happened to them because in God's terms, their time was up. Their days were fulfilled. And there was nothing more that they were going to be permitted to do in their lives.

[15 : 45] None of us has any promise of tomorrow. We think, oh yes, of course we know that. We say that. And we don't even mean that. But really, we expect to have tomorrow. And really, we expect that there should be plenty of years.

And if we're young, we think those years will stretch into the distance. And if somebody is cut down in their pride, we say, what a tragedy. How terrible. That can't possibly be God's will. Because God would never do that.

God would never allow somebody's life to be shorter than that person would want it to be. Well, God is in complete charge of the days of our lives. God gives us sufficient days in which to hear and turn to him.

For those who were slain when the town of Siloam fell, some may have been in a state of grace.

Some may have gone straight to heaven. And some would have gone to a lost eternity.

Likewise, the Galileans, whose blood pilot mingled with their sacrifices. Some of those would have been there to offer devout, genuine, heartfelt worship to the Lord. They were slain in the moment of their worship.

[16 : 51] Some of them would have been true believers who went to heaven. Some will not have been. And they will have gone to a lost eternity. It doesn't mean that they were better or worse than other people.

That was a tendency for many years, I think, long way. Especially in the wake of the First World War. And subsequently, for people to treat our fallen heroes as though by dying in action for their country, that meant they were automatically saved.

That meant they were automatically going to be in heaven. And a lot of stuff was saying, a greater love of no man than this. A man made down his life for his friends. All of that is true. But it does not necessarily mean that each one that perished in combat was amongst the saved.

And no doubt they would have wanted to live longer and grow old, become grandfathers and so on. And some would have been in a state of grace and some would not. Whether the town of Siloam falls alone or whether a pirate wringles their blood with the sacrifices or whether they fall in combat or whether their lives are tragically cut short by an accident or an act of brutality or terrorism.

Some will be in a state of grace and some will not. Some will have utilized the time and some will not. Some may have been expecting that as a little fig tree in a vineyard, we're safe for it.

[18 : 17] We can take all the time in the world. You don't know how much is all the time in the world. All the time in the world is all the time you have in the world.

All the time I have in the world. And that is not only finite, but it is unknown to us. We do not know the number of our days. We do not know when the Tower of Siloam is going to fall.

We do not know when our blood may be mingled with that sacrifices in the temple, figuratively speaking. I don't imagine that poor priest in Normandy knew that his days were about to end. I don't speculate on the state of anybody's condition just because they may be clergy or not. It would be a complete fallacy to say that ordination means somebody is automatically going to be in a state of grace or be in a state of glory when their time is under. I can't say that. I can't trust any act of ordination to guarantee glory for me. I'm saved by Christ and by none else or not at all.

[19 : 24] But nobody would have expected that in his own parish, in his own church environment, to be murdered, to have his life cut short in his own European country.

But it is happening and it gets closer and closer. Also, clergy of a murder on the streets of London in the past doesn't get much attention in the news. It's not fashionable to do so.

And I don't just mean clergy. Any of us could be brought to an end at any point. Our fig tree could be pulled up by the master of the vineyard at any time.

It's not that we or anybody else are worse or better sinners than any other person. But, except we repent, we shall all likewise perish.

The time that we are given in which to repent is the number of our days. And that is an unknown to us. It's not an unknown to God.

[20 : 27] Now, some speculate, of course, that this mingling of the blood of the Galileans is partly what may have created enmity between Herod, who was the king of Galilee, and Pilate.

And they speculate that perhaps that was one reason why, as we read in Luke 23, after Pilate sends Jesus over to Herod and then Herod sends him back. We read in verse 12, the same day, Pilate and Herod were made friends together.

For before they were enmity between themselves. It may have been this occasion. It might not have been. They might just have been enmity for mutual jealousy or any other number of reasons. But their mutual contempt of Christ bound them together.

Just as the mutual contempt of Christ binds together all the false religions of the world, all the forces of atheism and agnosticism and vain worldly philosophies, all are prepared to concede any amount of respect to any religion in the world but not to Christ.

Ever notice that consistency? Herod and Pilate are made friends by their enmity to Christ. And we, where do we for them? Well, what fruitfulness are we bringing forth?

[21 : 41] That is the question for us. A certain man, a fig tree, planted in his vineyard. Now, if for the Gentile church, the vineyard is the people of Israel.

And the Lord plants those whom he would save with ingrafted, as it were, to the heritage of the people of Israel. Even we, you know, miles, thousands of miles removed from Israel and from the people of the Jews and so on.

You know, most of our Bible is Old Testament. We've got the New Testament, yes, thank the Lord, the Gospel accounts, the Ephesians and the Revelation and all this. Most of our Bible is Old Testament.

Most of our Bible is the preparation for the coming of the Messiah. Huge amount of preparation before the actual fruitfulness. That ties in with everything we know of at the world. Whether it's planting a vineyard.

Whether it's making a film. As any filmmaker, no doubt, would tell you. The amount of time for each few seconds of fruitage. And the amount that ends up on the cutting room floor. And how many takes you have to do.

[22 : 45] Just for a few wee minutes of film. The amount of preparation is vast. The finished product is comparatively small. When an artist presents a canvas and there's all the detail and the colours and the figures and everything.

And they think, oh yeah, fantastic, great picture. And you look at it and you walk away. How many hours, months, weeks would have gone into the production of that work of art.

And likewise the preparation for the coming of the Messiah. How many thousands of years. No wonder the Old Testament is a bigger portion of our Bible. The preparation before the reality comes.

But that preparation, that is initially the property of the Old Testament Scriptures. Or the Hebrew Bible. We are grafted into that olive tree.

We are grafted unnaturally into what is their natural inheritance. And whenever the Lord plants His people, He plants them in the ground that He has prepared. We say in this context, the people of Israel, the people of the Jews.

[23 : 46] Let's just leave that aside for one minute. And think in terms of our situation. If we come to hear all or to know about the Lord. We don't do it in a vacuola.

We don't do it in a black canvas. We do it in a context, in a situation. Where the cultural background music of our island, of our nation.

Is that of the Gospel. That of Christianity. We will all of us no doubt have had godly souls in our families. Whether grandparents or parents or uncles or aunts.

Or our own family members, brothers or sisters. We will all have had the quiet background influence of the Gospel. Preparing us. Bigging up the soil.

Gathering out the stones. Giving us some head knowledge. Giving us some sort of background introduction to the reality of Christ. This is the vineyard. This is the background music.

[24 : 43] The people who have impacted on our lives. The cultural background and history. Which soaks everything in the atmosphere. And the scenery around us.

And the islands and all of that. And our country. In this heritage of Christian knowledge. Christian laws. Christian self-awareness.

Goodness me. The flag of our country. St. Andrew's Cross. What's the background to that? That supposedly that is the kind of cross of which St. Andrew was put to death.

Crucified. As a disciple of Jesus Christ. You can't help wondering if the atheist powers that be knew enough of this background history.

And the Christian nature of our country. Would they insist on a new flag? Would they insist on a different symbol for our land? For our country? But the fact is this is the background music.

[25 : 42] This is the context. This is the cultural identity. In which the Lord has placed us. Yes, it's different for different people. In different cultures. Different backgrounds.

Arabia. And Muslim countries. And Africa. And South America. All these different places. And all their different background heritages. Yeah. They can deal with that in their situation.

The word of God will speak to them. Just as it does to us. This is us. This is now. This is reality. And the word of God speaking to us where we are.

The background music. The cultural heritage. The preparation and advance that the Lord has made. With every person. And every piece of personal history that is impacted on our lives.

Which is part of the preparation of the vineyard of the soil. Into which now you, me, little fig tree are planted. Planted. Planted.

[26 : 36] Planted. Planted. And the Lord seeking. Waiting for. Fruit he looks for. Fruit he waits for.

Fruit he has a right to expect. And he comes looking for it. John the Baptist. John the Baptist. Said to the Jews who came to his.

His baptism. As he said. Bring forth therefore fruits. Worthy of repentance. Jesus is banging the same drum. We might say here.

Except you repent. You shall all likewise perish. Bring forth therefore fruits. Worthy of repentance. Of John. And begin not to say within yourselves. We have Abraham to our father.

For I say unto you. That God is able of these stones. To raise up children of Abraham. Or perhaps more shocking to the Jews of John's day. God is able to raise up from the Gentiles.

[27 : 35] Children to Abraham. God is able to take pagan nations. Who were worshipping false gods and idols. While we were still worshipping the true God.

In our better days. And we have now as a nation become heathen. And they have become more Christian than us. God is able of these stones.

To raise up children of Abraham. Don't anybody say. And I have heard it said. In public context. Oh nobody can tell me all of these things. I was brought up with the books.

And my grandfather would always bring them out. And we had worship every night. Okay. What are you now? What good did it do to that? That background preparation. That vineyard in which you were planted.

Where is the fruit now? And it is as though this is sometimes trotted out. As a source of pride. And of protection. And a member again.

[28 : 31] I've probably given you this illustration before. As a student minister. Visiting a home. This was in Aberdeen. And people. This is okay. It's in the early 90s.

We're talking about it. And people then said. Oh yes. We've connected with the church right enough. And they brought out from the drawer. And opened the box. And produced these pristine. Church lines. This junction certificates. Issued in 1949. And there they were. Pristine in the box. And they obviously hadn't used them to join another church. And they hadn't used them to rejoin their own local church. And they didn't go anywhere near. They didn't have a thought of the Lord. But there was their ticket to heaven. As they saw it. Then it was pristine. Forty years and more before. They had them issued.

[29 : 27] It expired after a year. I didn't have a heart to tell them that. But there it was. This is what they thought was going to make them safe. We have Abraham to our father. We have the vineyard round about us.

That's great. Where's the fruit? A certain man at a big tree planted in his vineyard. And he came and sought fruit thereof.

And found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard. Behold these three years. As I say. We don't get hung up on the three. Oh does that symbolize each once for a decade? Thirty years? That mean that's how long I've got? No. It's a period of time which is inumerated here. And it's not specific in terms of numbers to any individual.

But clearly it is sufficient. Clearly it is sufficient to the Lord of the vineyard. And however long or short your three years.

[30 : 22] An inverted promise may be. It is clearly sufficient in the eyes of God. These three years I come seeking fruit upon it. And finally I'll cut it down.

Why cumbereth it the ground? Why should it soak up resources? Time, energy that could be better spent on somebody else?

And he answering said unto him. Lord let it alone this year also. Spare it I. Till I shall dig about it. And loosen the earth. I'll dig down deep. I'll see if I reach the root of the problem. I'll put on manure. I'll put on fertilizer. And then if it bare fruit. Well that's good.

It's great. And if not. Then after that. Thou shall cut it down. If it bare fruit. That would be what we might call a late conversion.

[31 : 21] A late conversion can still be. Late repentance may still be absolutely genuine. Remember again Luke 23. Read verses 42 and 43. The people of the cross. And Jesus said.

He said. Lord remember me. When thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him. Verily I say unto thee today. Shalt thou be with me in paradise. Now it may well be.

And when that poor thief was dragging his cross to Golgotha. That he still wasn't thinking perhaps. About his sin. Or about his state. Or before God.

And maybe when they were nailing him down to the cross. And all the agony he was going through. Maybe he hadn't crossed his mind then. Maybe he'd begun to think about it. But in his conversation with his crucified colleague.

And with Jesus. He finally commutes to that faith in Christ. From which. Humanly speaking. He stands to gain nothing.

[32 : 19] He's not seriously expecting Jesus to pop the nails out. And bring him floating down from the cross. And start a whole new life on earth. Whatever his hope is.

It's not built in this world. Whatever the hope of this thief on the cross is. He knows. It's not going to be earth banned. Here we have no continuing city. That's not how fear God.

He says to his colleague. Seeing thou art in the same condemnation. And we indeed justly. For we receive the due reward of our deeds.

This man hath done nothing of us. And he said unto Jesus. Lord remember me. When thou comest into thy kingdom. That's all it was. He recognises the innocence of Jesus.

The guilt of himself. And pleads to be remembered. At his throne. That I ask him to be said Jesus. Today. Shalt thou be with me.

[33 : 19] In paradise. In paradise. Late repentance may yet be genuine. And may yet be saving grace. The Lord is prepared to put in the extra time.

He is prepared to dig. He is prepared to put in his soil. And the manure. And the fertilizing. He is prepared to water it with his own tears.

And enrich it with his own blood. He is prepared to die. But there might be fruit on this little fig tree. Let it alone this year also.

Till I shall dig about it and dung it. And if it bear fruit well. And if not. Then after that. I shall cut it down. Because eventually.

However many years we are given. Whether we are given 20 years. Or whether we are given 120 years. Eventually. As it says. You know there in Genesis.

[34 : 15] Even Methuselah. And Lamech. And you know. And he died. And he died. And he died. 969 years you might get. Like Methuselah. But eventually. He died.

Eventually then. If it bears no fruit. Then. Thou shalt cut it down. And eventually. However fruitful we may be. We are either cut down. As an unfruitful grudge. Or cut back.

And proved. That we may bear more fruit. One way or another. The number of our days. Will be fulfilled. What will have been done.

In those days. And how many have passed. Let me suggest. To you. Though I do not know. The number of your days. Any more than I know. The number of my own.

That just as the number. Of those which has passed. Is probably greater. Than those which may remain. As it was for this victory. Three years had gone.

[35 : 13] One year of grace left. If the Lord of the vineyard. Listens. To the intercessions. Deceptions. Of his vine dresser. Then a quarter remains.

Now again. We don't want to get hung up. On fractions. All we need to recognize. Is how much has gone. And how comparatively little. May be left.

Now. Is the hour of grace. Now. Is the day. Of salvation. Remember. Remember how. Our Lord. Wept. Over Jerusalem.

We go to the end of the chapter. Verse 34. Oh Jerusalem. Jerusalem. Which killest the prophets. And stonest them. That are sent unto thee. How often. Would I have gathered.

Thy children together. As a hen. Doth gather. Her brood. Under her wings. And you would not. How often. Have I interceded. How often. Have I pled.

[36 : 10] And you would not. This is the time. That remains to us. While the Lord. Intercedes. And he is. We are taught. He is.

At the right hand. Of the father. Even now. Interceding. For sinners. Like us. Except we abide. In the vine. We will not bear. Any fruit at all. We must abide.

In Christ. And if it bear fruit. Well. And if not. Then after that. Thou shalt cut it down. Now. One of the things. That is most striking. About this.

Parable here. Is that it is. In a sense. Unfinished. We are not told. How the story ends. Are we?

We are not told. And yes. It did bear fruit. In the old. Happily ever. I know it didn't. So it was withered up. From its root. And he tore it down. After all. Three.

[37 : 06] Four years. Of a waste of time. We don't know. We are not told. How it ended. We are just told.

That the bind dresser. Interceded. And that this is what he said he would do. And then we just read. He was teaching in one of the synagogues. And we said. We never know how the story ends.

I would suggest to you. That that is no accident. That the Lord. And his providence. Leaves. The page. As it were. Open. For each one of us.

To write in our own ending. And I think. Oh it's not me. And of course. It's the Lord. Yeah. Okay. It's the Lord. Who's in control. Of all these things. The Lord.

Who controls the fruitfulness. Except you abide in the vine. Except you abide in him. You won't have any. As I think I have. Mentioned in the past. The wine left.

[38 : 03] To quote anything. From false religion. It is an Islamic proverb. Which is reputed to say. That when the books are open. At the last day. The story of our lives.

Will be found there written. And it will be found written. In our own hand. The page is blank. Still. As far as we are concerned. The parable.

Is uncompleted. Because the story. And how it ends. For each one of us. Is yet unfinished.

It is yet. To be completed. And the Lord. Has left the story. Open and the page blank. For you and me. To write in.

How we want it to end. And then. To back of it. Let us pray. Thank you.