

God's Desire for Fruitfulness

- I. Introduction
 - a. READ Luke 13:1-9
- II. KEY STATEMENT: God desires fruit from His people, and takes great pains to assure that they produce fruit.
- III. From the Jews perspective
 - a. Their view of suffering - They tended to believe that suffering was the direct result of the victim's sins
 - i. The truth is that all mankind's suffering is the result of all of mankind's sins
 - 1. But we cannot, with our human understanding, judge whether a particular case of suffering is the direct result of his own wickedness or wickedness in general
 - ii. The Jews thought they were better than others and delighted to hear of others suffering b/c, to them, it proved they were better
 - iii. Jesus said, You are no better and deserve the same thing
 - iv. What disasters should produce in us is not pride, but repentance
 - v. There but for the grace of God go I
 - b. Jesus warning – Unless you repent you will all likewise perish
 - i. Many of them DID likewise perish – 40 years later
 - 1. When the Roman armies came to execute God's judgment on those who rejected and crucified the Messiah
 - 2. Many were killed when the walls and towers fell
 - 3. Many more had their blood mingled with their sacrifices not just by the Roman conquerors, but in the months and of internal wars within the besieged city in which the city was divided into three warring factions that filled the city with violence before a single foreign soldier entered
 - c. Jesus intercession for them - Jesus acted as the keeper of the vineyard, speaking for mercy on behalf of the nation that had not born fruit
 - i. He recognized that it could not continue as it was
 - ii. But he would give it special care for a short while longer
 - 1. He had done this before – when He gave Israel a last chance and sent many prophets to warn them
 - 2. And when He gave Judah a last chance and sent many prophets to warn them (Is 5:1-9)
 - 3. Now it was happening again
 - iii. Jesus' special included:

1. An earthly ministry in which He exhibited all the attributes both of the prophesied Messiah and the Divine Son of God
 2. Sending apostles and prophets to preach first to the Jews, then the Gentiles
 3. The results
 - a. All who would listen and bear fruit did so
 - b. But by and large, the nation rejected the gospel
 - i. Jesus grief (Luke 13:34)
 - ii. Luke 19:41-44
 4. So finally that national judgment came
- iv. Now they are an example to us
1. Unless we repent we will all likewise perish
 2. Unless we bear fruit we will meet with a similar judgment.
- IV. From the Christian's perspective
- a. What kind of fruit is God looking for in us?
 - i. The fruit of the Spirit
 1. Gal. 5:22-23
 2. Does God find these attitudes and actions in us?
 - ii. The fruit of good works
 1. This is how we exhibit the fruit of the Spirit
 2. Luke 3:7-14 – worthy of repentance
 3. Matt. 5:14-16 – good works that glorify God
 - b. What other fruit might He find?
 - i. Dead fruit
 1. Tied on – Like a Christmas tree
 - a. Clove apple
 - b. Mummified fruit on a dying tree
 2. It does not spring from our character or our love for God
 3. Vain worship (Matt. 6:1-7)
 - a. Empty prayer or almsgiving
 - b. For the praise of men rather than God
 4. Dead fruit = Dead works
 - a. Heb 9:14
 - b. Gal 2:16
 - ii. Bad fruit
 1. Matt. 7:15-20 – The fruit will be like the tree
 2. Luke 6:45 – The life will reflect the heart
 3. Bad fruit = Wicked works
 4. Gal. 5:19-21 – Works of the flesh
 - c. What might God do to encourage us to bear fruit?
 - i. He might dig around us (Luke 13:8)
 1. To clear away weeds of unrighteousness
 2. Thorns of worldly cares and the deceitfulness of riches (Mat. 13:22)

3. Break up the hard ground of indifference
- ii. He might fertilize us (Luke 13:8)
 1. By enriching our lives with opportunities to feed on God's word
 2. And human relationships that will encourage us toward spiritual things and godliness
- iii. He might prune us (John 15:1-6)
 1. By taking away from us things that may seem necessary to us
 2. But distract us from what should be our highest priority
- iv. He may give us a stern warning - Middle-eastern cure for the unfruitfulness of a palm-tree - From Rosenmiiller (*Alte und Reue Margenland*, vol. v. p. i87): ' Thou must take a hatchet, and go to the tree with a friend, unto whom thou sayest, I will cut down this tree, for it is unfruitful. He answers, Do not so, this year it will certainly bear fruit. But the other says, It must needs be,—it must be hewn down; and gives the stem of the tree three blows with the back of the hatchet. His friend restrains him, crying, Nay, do it not, thou wilt certainly have fruit from it this year, only have patience, and be not overhasty in cutting it down ; if it still refuses to bear fruit, then cut it down. Then will the tree that year be certainly fruitful and bear abundantly.' – Noted by Trench in Parables, pg. 356
- v. Isn't that what John did in Luke 3:7-9?
- d. What will happen if we persist in unfruitfulness?
 - i. We will be cut down – Luke 13:9
 - ii. We will be cut off, wither and be burned - John 15:2, 5-6
 - iii. We will be cut down and cast into the fire -Luke 3:7-9

V. Conclusion

- a. What does God find in your life and my life today?
 - i. Good fruit?
 - ii. Dead fruit?
 - iii. Bad fruit?
- b. How long has he been coming back seeking good fruit and finding none?
- c. For which of us is Jesus pleading with the Father, please let me try just a little bit longer before you cut him or her down?
- d. I beg you brothers and sisters, be zealous for good works, bear good fruit for God that we as a congregation can rejoice in the fruitfulness and blessings that God has given us! So that we need not mourn and weep for those who have exhausted the last of God's mercy and have perished spiritually!
- e. Invitation
 - i. If you are not a Christian
 1. You need Jesus

2. The fact that you are still alive today is demonstration of God's mercy and love for you
 3. Do not tempt his mercy or risk His wrath for another hour
 4. Come to Him today
- ii. If you are Christian who recognizes that your life has been producing the wrong kind of fruit
 1. Prune what needs pruned
 2. Fertilize what need fertilized
 3. Bear fruit for God before His mercy toward you comes to an end
- iii. We must all bear fruit worthy of repentance
 1. The fruit of the spirit
 2. and the good works that bring glory to God