

Luke 13

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Introduction:

1. Luke the writer is a man well-educated in Greek and Roman cultures who is writing to an office holder in the Roman Government. The man, Theophilus, was probably a believer in Christ already.
2. The entry of Jesus into the story follows shortly after John's ministry began. Jesus was anointed to the office of the Messiah by John and selected twelve men for intensive training.
3. During much of Luke, we have seen large crowds following Jesus and His conflicts with the religious rulers. They try to prove our Lord wrong and always come off second best and humiliated.
4. Here Jesus is continuing to press for repentance from His hearers.

Lesson Content:

The Importance of Repentance

The Parable of the Fruitless Tree

The Healing of the Woman Bent Double

Parables about the Kingdom

The Narrow Gate into the Kingdom

Going to Jerusalem to Perish with the Prophets.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REPENTANCE

(1.) About this time Jesus was informed that Pilate had murdered some people from Galilee as they were offering sacrifices at the Temple. (2) “Do you think those Galileans were

worse sinners than all the other people from Galilee?" Jesus asked. "Is that why they suffered? (3) Not at all! And you will perish, too, unless you repent of your sins and turn to God.



- **Pilate**, the Roman Governor, had killed some **Galileans** who had come to Jerusalem to offer **sacrifices** at the Temple. They were probably makers of political trouble, but were they worse than other **Galileans**? The expected answer is “no.” Had God singled them out for early death? No. These **Galileans perished** and so will anyone else who does not **repent**.
- **Repentance is more** than just being sorry about being caught. *Judas* was sorry, but didn’t repent. He committed suicide. Matthew 27:3-10. *King Saul* was sorry that the kingdom of Israel was being taken away from him, but he did not repent.
- **Repentance is more** than being busy about religious work. The Sanhedrin officials were very busy doing what they believed to be the work of God, but a murder now and then was okay even in view of the commandment to not murder. Paul was more zealous than all of the rest, but he still had to repent. He posts his resumé in Philippians 3:4-11.

- **Repentance** is more than stopping bad habits (like stopping smoking), enrolling in self-improvement or image-building programs.

Repentance was used by the Greek military as a word for “about face.” Repentance is to go in a different direction. Biblical repentance is redirecting the mind and heart constantly toward the revealed will of God and away from worldly-mindedness.

- It is popular to rename sin so it doesn’t sound like sin:
 - Adultery becomes “an affair.”
 - Fornication becomes “safe sex.”
 - Sodomy becomes “gay love.”
 - Murder becomes “pro-choice.”
 - A Lie becomes a “fib.”

Rather than trivialize sin, we must repent.

(4.) And what about the eighteen people who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them? Were they the worst sinners in Jerusalem? (5) No, and I tell you again that unless you repent, you will perish, too.”

- **Death** is not limited to people from distant Galilee. Right here in town is another illustration. **Siloam** was in southeast Jerusalem.
- The 18 weren't any worse than anyone else who does not **repent**. **Repentance** is a change of lifestyle, agreeing to live as God wants. It is *a change of mind that leads to a change of conduct*.

THE PARABLE OF THE FRUITLESS FIG TREE

(6.) Then Jesus told this story: “A man planted a fig tree in his garden and came again and again to see if there was any fruit on

it, but he was always disappointed. (7) Finally, he said to his gardener, 'I've waited three years, and there hasn't been a single fig! Cut it down. It's just taking up space in the garden.'

- The **tree**, being in a garden, may have received special attention. Even then, it did not bear **figs** for **three** successive years. The owner wanted it gone so the ground could be used for something productive. The leaves of the tree may have interfered with light reaching some of the plants.

(8.) "The gardener answered, 'Sir, give it one more chance. Leave it another year, and I'll give it special attention and plenty of fertilizer. (9) If we get figs next year, fine. If not, then you can cut it down.'"

- The **gardener** cared for the **fig** tree and asked for one more **year**. He would dig around the tree and **fertilize** it. If the one-year extension didn't work, then he would agree to **cut it down**.
- **McGarvey** says:

Those to whom Jesus spoke had been called to repentance by the preaching both of John and of Jesus, and had had ample time and opportunity to bring forth the fruits of repentance, and deserved to be destroyed; but they would still be allowed further opportunity.

- **James Smith** writes:

That nation did not bear fruit for God. Yet God was patient with them. Through Christ they were being given one last opportunity to repent. If they did not turn to the Lord, they as a nation would be cut down. The fulfillment is what happened in AD 70 when the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem and Israel as a nation.

THE HEALING OF THE WOMAN BENT DOUBLE

(10.) One Sabbath day as Jesus was teaching in a synagogue, (11) he saw a woman who had been crippled by an evil spirit. She had been bent double for eighteen years and was unable to stand up straight. (12) When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Dear woman, you are healed of your sickness!" (13) Then he touched her, and instantly she could stand straight. How she praised God!

- This event was at the Saturday **synagogue** meeting and was not part of the previous events. The woman had a **sickness** caused by an **evil spirit** and was **bent double**. Jesus healed her in a single sentence with the laying on of His hands. She immediately **praised God**.

(14.) But the leader in charge of the synagogue was indignant that Jesus had healed her on the Sabbath day. "There are six days of the week for working," he said to the crowd. "Come on those days to be healed, not on the Sabbath."

- The heartless synagogue official criticized because the **healing** was done on the **Sabbath**, breaking their interpretation of the Law of Moses. The man was **indignant** with **Jesus**, but he directed his remarks to the crowd. He probably lacked the nerve to attack **Jesus** directly.
- The official was acknowledging that a **healing** had occurred. He was focused on the *timing* rather than the *meaning* of the **healing**.

(15.) But the Lord replied, "You hypocrites! Each of you works on the Sabbath day! Don't you untie your ox or your donkey from its stall on the Sabbath and lead it out for water? (16) This dear woman, a daughter of Abraham, has been held in bondage

by Satan for eighteen years. Isn't it right that she be released, even on the Sabbath?"

- The Lord called the official and others like him **hypocrites** because they would meet their animal's needs on the **Sabbath**, but not the needs of **a daughter of Abraham** who was **bound** by **Satan for eighteen** long **years**. Jesus was guiltless under their own application of the **Sabbath** rules.

(17.) This shamed his enemies, but all the people rejoiced at the wonderful things he did.

- As in past conflicts, the religious officials were humiliated. By contrast, the crowds were **rejoicing** over this and other things being done by our Lord.

PARABLES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD

(18.) Then Jesus said, "What is the Kingdom of God like? How can I illustrate it? (19) It is like a tiny mustard seed that a man planted in a garden; it grows and becomes a tree, and the birds make nests in its branches."



- Jesus now had the attention of the synagogue and explained more about **the Kingdom of God**. It is like a **tiny mustard seed** that **grew to become a tree**. It was the **nesting** place for **birds**.
- **James Smith** says:

A mustard plant reaches ten to fifteen feet. Birds would fill the branches of this tree. Once established, the kingdom of God would keep on expanding. People of every race and nationality would find that kingdom a blessing.

(20.) He also asked, “What else is the Kingdom of God like? (21) It is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough.”

- Further, the kingdom would expand **like yeast** expands bread. The **women** could especially relate to this comparison and remember, Luke records things of interest to ladies.
- **James Smith** says here:

The point is that the kingdom of God is introduced from without through the teaching of Jesus. It is worked into the hearts of men. Once there, the teaching of the kingdom penetrates and transforms lives from within. The kingdom, then, is a life transforming power within the lives of individuals.

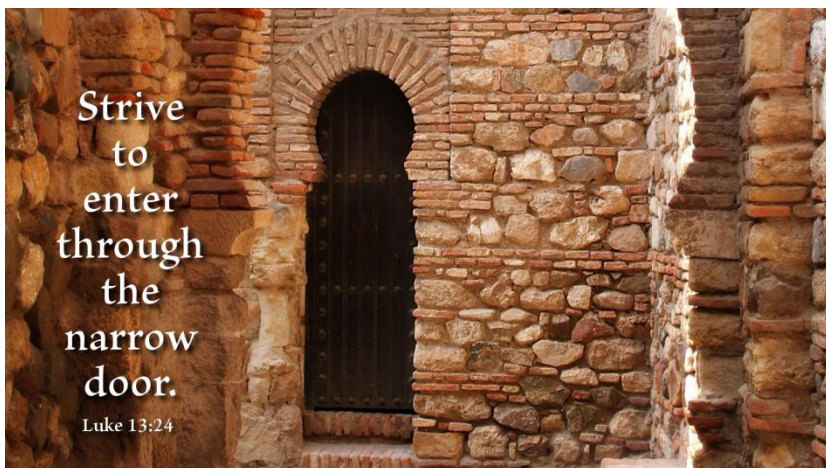
THE NARROW GATE INTO THE KINGDOM

(22.) Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he went, always pressing on toward Jerusalem.

- The trip to **Jerusalem** began back in Luke 9:51 NLT:

As the time drew near for him to ascend to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.
- **Jesus** was not in a hurry to get there. He stopped in **towns and villages** to **teach** about the kingdom of God.

(23.) Someone asked him, “Lord, will only a few be saved?” He replied, (24) “Work hard to enter the narrow door to God’s Kingdom, for many will try to enter but will fail.



- The rabbis taught that all children of Abraham would be **saved**. Jesus was teaching that **being saved** depended on repentance and a relationship with God.
- Jesus' answer moved the question from the general to the individual person. Don't focus on them; focus on yourself. It takes **hard work** to enter the **narrow door**. Not everyone who wants to be **saved** will make adequate effort. While it is true we are **saved** by God's grace and not our own efforts, it takes some focus to acquire the grace of God.
- Here is the Christian's response to questions like "What do you think about ____ church?" We need to focus on our own salvation and not be judging others.

(25.) When the master of the house has locked the door, it will be too late. You will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Lord, open the door for us!' But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' (26) Then you will say, 'But we ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' (27) And he will reply, 'I tell you, I don't know you or where you come from. Get away from me, all you who do evil.'

- Christ is **master** of the **house** of salvation. The day will come when He **shuts the door** to eternal life. Those who refused to strive to enter now will find themselves outside **knocking** and **pleading**. He will not acknowledge **knowing** them.
- On the day of judgment these people would plead that they had heard Jesus **teach**, they had dined with Him on occasion. But merely being near Jesus is not the same as accepting him as Savior and Lord. In the same way, attending church and knowing active believers will not save us now.
- Jesus calls these hangers-on **you who do evil**.

(28.) “There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for you will see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, but you will be thrown out. (29) And people will come from all over the world—from east and west, north and south—to take their places in the Kingdom of God. (30) And note this: Some who seem least important now will be the greatest then, and some who are the greatest now will be least important then.”

- The **weeping and gnashing** was from those who missed the feast in the **Kingdom of God**. They will be **thrown out**. Their great national heroes and **prophets** will be there, but these Christ-rejecters won't. In fact, **people** will come **from all over the world** for the feast while these critics are rejected.
- **James Smith** says:
The lost Jews will see or realize that Gentiles from all over the world will be seated where they could have been seated in that heavenly kingdom.
- Remember, Luke is writing to Theophilus, a Gentile. The **least important** are Gentiles and the **the greatest now** are Jews.

GOING TO JERUSALEM TO PERISH WITH THE PROPHETS

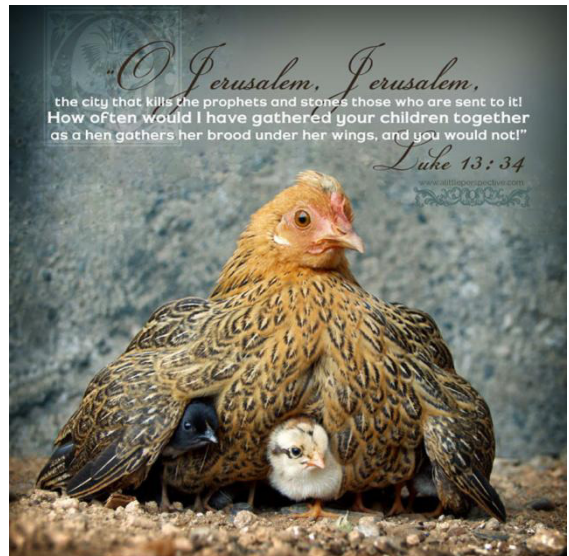
(31.) At that time some Pharisees said to him, “Get away from here if you want to live! Herod Antipas wants to kill you!”

- The warning was not friendly. The **Pharisees** wanted Jesus to move on to Jerusalem where they were in political control and could rid themselves of Him permanently.

(32.) Jesus replied, “Go tell that fox that I will keep on casting out demons and healing people today and tomorrow; and the third day I will accomplish my purpose. (33) Yes, today, tomorrow, and the next day I must proceed on my way. For it wouldn’t do for a prophet of God to be killed except in Jerusalem!

- Herod Antipas was a sly fellow with an Idumean father, a Samaritan mother, a Jew by profession and a heathen by practice. **Jesus** sent word to Herod that he was not a political threat to the king. He was **casting out demons** and **healing** the sick.
- He would journey, but at his own pace. His destination was **Jerusalem**. Jesus calls himself a **prophet** and that He would perish at **Jerusalem**.

(34.) “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God’s messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn’t



let me. (35) And now, look, your house is abandoned. And you will never see me again until you say, 'Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

- Jesus loved the city of **Jerusalem** and her inhabitants even though they have **killed prophets** sent from **God**.
- He wanted to spare those people from judgment, like a **hen** might try to **protects her chicks** under her **wings**. But Israel would not have it.
- Because they would reject Him, they would be **abandoned**. This must refer to the destruction that would come upon them.
- After their house is **abandoned**, there will be a time when they say "**Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord.**"