



Jesus' Warning and Weeping over Jerusalem Luke 13

Introduction

Suffering is a universal experience in life. Some people blame God, some people deny the legitimacy of suffering, and many believe (or at least hope) suffering is for other people and will not happen to them. Job, one of the earliest books of the Bible, is about suffering. Jesus taught about it and experienced it more than any other person. Luke 13 begins with a question about suffering. Only Luke records the material found in the first seventeen verses.

Outline of Luke 13

- I. Suffering, Second Chance, and Sabbath Healing - Luke 13:1-17
- II. Expansion and Exclusion in the Kingdom - Luke 13:18-30
- III. A Warning from Herod and One for Jerusalem - Luke 13:31-35

I. Suffering, Second Chance, and Sabbath Healing - Luke 13:1-17

A. The Problem of Suffering - Luke 13:1-5

1. Pilate's murdering of martyrs - 13:1-3

The most difficult kind of suffering to accept is the suffering of the innocent. As Jesus approached Jerusalem, people asked His opinion of a recent tragedy. During one of the Jewish feasts, some worshipers from Galilee were in Jerusalem for the holy day when Pilate, apparently without provocation, chose to murder them and mingle their blood with the blood of their sacrifices. It was a cowardly display of strength -- the kind of terrorism an insecure governor, or government, commits to keep people under subjection.

2. Jesus' answer as a warning - 13:4-5

Jesus' answer was that those Galileans were no more sinful than other Galileans, or than anyone who suffers without cause. The incident should be taken as a warning to repent. *"Unless you repent you will all likewise perish."*

Jesus reminded them of a similar incident when a tower fell on people who were no more sinful than others. Accidents or disasters for which we cannot find meaning serve as warnings. If those sufferers were undeserving victims, we are potential victims. We differ only in time, not in kind, if no tragedy has happened yet.

Jesus' warning to them applies to us also. *"Unless you repent you will all likewise perish."* Are you repentant or perishing? Unwarned, we are helpless. If the warning is unheeded, we are foolish. Repent is a key word of the Bible which all need to heed. To ignore it means certain doom - perishing.

B. Parable of the Fig Tree's Second Chance - Luke 13:6-9

1. Explanation of the parable

"A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard." The term "A certain man" is a familiar one in Luke (14:16; 19:12; 20:9). The fig tree was associated with Israel's privileged position. It is used as a symbol of Israel even today. Israel was God's vineyard. See Isaiah 5; Jeremiah 2:21; Matthew 21:33-41. God is the owner. The dresser is Jesus, the three years are His ministry, and the fourth year the apostles' ministries. The cutting down of the tree was a picture of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. (The Student's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, George Williams).

2. Application of the parable

There should have been fruit on the tree but there was none. Could it not remain as just a nice tree? No, the owner would not allow it to be just a nice tree, for it used up ground and water. It was not created for decoration but for fruit. So are we. Jesus said, *"I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit."* The fruit tree was given a second chance, the fourth year, because of the intercession of Jesus Himself. Then if it bore no fruit, it would be cut down. Is Jesus finding fruit in your life, the fruit of the Spirit, and the fruit of souls won for Him?

C. Sabbath Healing - Luke 13:10-17

1. A weakened woman - 13:10-11

Jesus was teaching in a synagogue. It was the last time He did so in the Book of Luke. There was a woman with a *spirit of infirmity*, meaning that her spirit contributed to her infirmity. Her deformity was a psychosomatic condition, a physical weakness at least partly the result of her attitude and thoughts. She was bent over and could not straighten up. How many of us are "bent out of shape" too? Sadly, many of our problems, physical and otherwise, are the result of unhealthy thoughts and attitudes. Your body is influenced by your mind. *For as he thinks in his heart, so is he* (Proverbs 23:7).

For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Romans 8:6). We all need help to be straight again. Do your thoughts promote health, or infirmity? Paul gives good advice in Philippians 4:8, *Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report....meditate on these things.* To dwell on negative, unpleasant, critical thoughts that do not meet these criteria is to invite disease, discomfort, and distress.

2. A compassionate Savior - 13:12-13

Jesus noticed the woman, rather than the appointments of the building or the clothing of the rich. She did not request healing. Perhaps she was too full of self-pity or so resigned to carrying her burden that she did not expect Him to heal her. Jesus took the initiative, "*Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.*" If Jesus says you are loosed, you are loosed. "*If the Son makes you free, you are free indeed*" (John 8:36). Has Jesus freed you from some habit or sin? Do not return to it. Believe that you are freed. Act as one who is freed! Live free of anger, jealousy, fear, extravagance, alcohol, drugs, cursing, or illicit sex. The woman was freed immediately, made straight, and she glorified God. Will you let Jesus straighten you also so that you may glorify Him?

3. A wicked ruler - 13:14-17

This glorious demonstration of grace and power brought out the hostility and corruption in the heart of the ruler of the synagogue. Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, he made his case with cold logic. "*There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.*" Jesus called him a hypocrite, pointing out that even animals received care and water on the Sabbath. Should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, receive healing after eighteen years of bondage to Satan? His adversaries were momentarily ashamed to have their hard hearts exposed but the audience rejoiced over the glorious things He did. In which group are you, those with cold convention or warm compassion? Which do you show to those who are helpless?

II. Expansion and Exclusion in the Kingdom- Luke 13:18-30

A. Two Parables about Expansion - Luke 13:18-21

The parables of the mustard seed and leaven both picture the miraculous growth of the kingdom of God from initially small beginnings. Expansion of the kingdom is the point of both parables.

1. Mustard seed - 13:18-19

Then He said, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches." The growth of the kingdom would be extraordinary, like a mustard plant that grows rapidly from a seed to a large shrub. All kinds of birds would be drawn to it and nest in its branches. This may be an allusion to the inclusion of the Gentiles in the kingdom of God, as prophesied in a similar passage in Ezekiel 17:23.

2. Leaven - 13:20-21

A woman took leaven and kneaded it into the dough until it all was leavened. By natural process it would spread through the dough causing it to increase in volume. The lesson of this parable is the same as that of the mustard seed, the growth and expansion of the kingdom of God. Like leaven in dough, the church spread rapidly throughout the Roman Empire in the first century. In fact, it has never stopped growing. As Jesus said, "*The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*" (Matthew 16:18). The growth is a fact predicted by Jesus.

3. Question of interpretation

Although some commentators suggest that the leaven is an evil influence, we should beware of stretching the interpretation of the parable too far. A parable is not an allegory where every detail must have a meaning. A parable is a simple story used to illustrate a spiritual lesson. In both of these parables, the lesson is the growth of the kingdom.

However, we do know that negative effects often accompany the church's growth. These effects may be hinted at by the extraneous birds sitting in the branches and the use of leaven hidden in the dough. Often in Scripture, leaven is presented as a symbol of evil. Jesus warned His disciples to "*Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.*" The apostle Paul warned the Corinthians to "*Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump*" (1 Corinthians 5:7). However, there are Old Testament passages which present leaven as good and acceptable before God. In Leviticus 23:17 the grain offering was baked with leaven and in Amos 4:5 the sacrifice of thanksgiving was presented with leaven.

Ultimately, we should beware of reading into a parable something that is simply not intended. Let us rejoice in the expansion of God's kingdom which has occurred

just as Jesus foretold. But let us not ignore hidden evils that may crop up in a church and find a home there. Even a growing church needs discernment!

B. Exclusion from the Kingdom - Luke 13:22-30

1. A curious question - 13:22-23

On the journey to Jerusalem, Jesus' teaching stimulated questions. Someone, addressing Him respectfully as "Lord", asked if only a few would be saved. The question may have referred to the Messianic kingdom, and if many Jews, or any Gentiles, would be included. Jesus' teaching with its high moral standards may have made this Jew wonder how many would qualify.

2. A strongly personal answer - 13:24

Jesus did not answer the question directly, but gave an application. "*Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you will seek to enter and will not be able.*" It is not our business to know how many will be saved. That is God's business. It is my business to know if I am saved and your business to know if you are saved. Make sure, dear friend, that you enter the narrow gate by way of Jesus. To be a part of Jesus' flock, you must come through Him for He is "*the door of the sheep*" (John 10:7).

Who are the ones who want to enter but cannot? Are they ones who will never hear? Many people ask about the fate of those who live in remote areas where the gospel has not gone out, yet they do nothing to reach an unsaved friend!

3. A stern parable - 13:25-27

Jesus followed the application with a parable of illustration. "*When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from' then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'*"

Who are these people? Are they those who relied on such things as sacraments, belonging to the right church, or their own good works? Those whom the Master does not recognize nor allow to enter protest that He ate and drank with them and taught in their streets. They were workers, but He calls them "*workers of iniquity*" because they did not bother to know Him personally, nor repent of their sins, nor honor Him as Lord. On which side of the door are you?

4. A severe warning - 13:28-30

Jesus closes the parable with three pointed personal predictions which also answer the initial question of 13:23, "*Lord, are there few who are saved?*"

First, "*there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" Anyone who thinks it does not matter what happens after death is wrong. Consciousness continues and the reality is either joyous or grievous. They (the *workers of iniquity*) will be able to see the patriarchs and prophets but will not be able to be with them. Suddenly there will be realization of the meaning of life, but opportunity will be forever past and the die cast. No wonder there will be terrible regret.

Second, "*they will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.*" A worldwide stream, including many Gentiles, will enter their rest (Hebrews 4:1). The unbelieving questioners of Israel will see others enjoy what they could have had.

Third, "*there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.*" This can mean first and last in time, or first and last in privilege and opportunity. Perhaps the last to hear, the unreached peoples and tribes who respond so eagerly, will be first in the kingdom, ahead of many who had the truth in depth and did little with it. The Jews were the first to have the gospel as a people. (See Romans 3:1-2.) Paul says that the gospel is to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Romans 1:16). But Jesus warns the Jews that they are about to lose their position. What are you doing with the position and opportunities God has given you?

III. A Warning from Herod and One for Jerusalem - Luke 13:31-35

A. Herod's Warning - Luke 13:31-33

The same day, the Pharisees told Jesus of Herod's intent to kill Him, neglecting to mention their own plot against Him (John 7:1). Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, ruled over Galilee and Perea (Matthew 14:1; Luke 3:1). Jesus was probably in Perea, across the Jordan, planning to approach Jerusalem from the east to avoid the Jewish outskirts and hostility from the Jewish leaders.

Jesus referred to Herod as "*that fox*". His answer was to tell Herod, "*Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.*" His ministry was to do good, to harm no one. It was drawing to a close, but not because of Herod. He went to Jerusalem deliberately, knowing that it was the graveyard of prophets.

B. Jesus' Sorrow over Jerusalem - Luke 13:34-35

1. His lament - 13:34

Jesus gave a cry of mingled anguish, love, and warning. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem.....How often I wanted to gather your children together...." This echoes King David's lament over Absalom, his rebellious son, "O my son Absalom - my son, Absalom - if only I had died in your place."

The prophet Jeremiah also lamented over Jerusalem.

*How lonely sits the city
That was full of people!
How like a widow is she,
Who was great among the nations!
The princess among the provinces
Has become a slave!.....
For these things I weep;
My eye, my eye overflows with water....*

Lamentations 1:1,16

The Holy City had seen the blood of many prophets in her streets, and would soon see the blood of Jesus as He went out from her to go to Calvary. Pause and think about Jesus' lament, "How often I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!" Lord, make us willing to receive Your love.

2. Jesus' last words to Jerusalem - 13:35

"See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly I will say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'" Jesus quoted Psalm 118:26 and applied it to Himself. After pouring out His grace and mercy in unparalleled opportunity, yet with no response on the part of the city, there was nothing left but to pronounce judgment. The judgment would fall in A.D. 70 when the temple was destroyed, the city was ruined, and Judaism became truncated. Also, Jesus was appearing for the last time until His return as King. "This solemn utterance seems to mean that the return of the Lord awaits the national repentance of Israel (Acts 3:19-21)" (The New Bible Commentary, Davidson and Stibbs, editors).

Applications

1. Do you weep and plead before judging and condemning? What is the one more effort you can make before leaving a situation?
2. What good act can you do today amidst those who misunderstand, criticize, and even endanger you?
3. Today, will you trust only Jesus for inclusion in His kingdom and not rely on your good works, personality, talents, connections, or education?

QUESTIONS

Questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read lesson notes and references.

1. What was new to you in this lesson?

2. Which verse was most important or meaningful to you in Luke 13? Why?

3. Do you believe that everyone who does not repent of their sin will perish? Why or why not?

DAY TWO: Read Luke 14:1-6.

4. a. Where does the scene take place?

b. What was the occasion?

c. List those who were present (Luke 14:1-3).

5. a. What was the attitude of the Pharisees in 14:1?

b. Do you think the man with dropsy was there by design of the Pharisees? Give reasons for your answer. See Luke 11:53-54.

c. How did Jesus' question and the Pharisees' response indicate a trap?

6. a. What did Jesus do for the man?

b. How did Jesus expose the Pharisees' hard hearts?

DAY THREE: Read Luke 14:7-14.

7. a. What caused Jesus to tell a parable to the guests?

b. Why should a person not take the best seat?

c. Why should a person take a less desirable seat?

8. a. What is the point of the parable in 14:11?

b. Give a similar phrase or thought from the following Scripture passages.

Psalm 18:27

Proverbs 29:23

Matthew 23:12

Luke 18:14

James 4:6

9. a. When will people who feed the poor and helpless be repaid?

b. ♥(Heart Question) Have you ever invited someone who could not repay you to a meal? If so, will you share this experience with your group?

DAY FOUR: Read Luke 14:15-24; Matthew 22:2-10.

10. Do you think the Matthew and Luke passages tell the same parable? Give a reason for your answer.

11. In each account, tell how Matthew and Luke describe the following.
The person giving the dinner

The kind of dinner it was

The number of servants

The response of the invited guests

The response of the host

The final result

12. What is your response to the “*certain man’s*” (“*king*” in Matthew) invitation?

DAY FIVE: Read Luke 14:25-33.

13. a. ? (Thought Question) Compare Luke 14:26 with Matthew 10:37. What main word is different?

b. How does this difference help us understand what Jesus meant?

14. Combine Matthew 10:38, Mark 8:34, and Luke 14:27 into one sentence.

15. Use the following Scripture passages to explain what it means for a person to “*take up his cross*” (Mark 8:34).

Romans 6:6,11-12

1 Corinthians 1:18

Galatians 2:20

Galatians 6:14

16. a. If someone asked what it means to “*take up his cross*” (Mark 8:34) what would you tell them?

b. ♥(Heart Question) What does it mean to you personally to take up your cross?

17. What examples does Jesus give of counting the cost? Give Verses.

18. How does a Christian count the cost of being a true disciple of Jesus (Luke 14:33)?

DAY SIX: Read Luke 14:34-35.

19. a. What is salt’s main attraction?

b. What is it good for without that?

20. How useful is a believer who will not take up his or her cross?