

## Opening Song – Stuck

“Right in the middle of my heart, You set Your love in me.  
Right in the middle of my life, You let Your anchor down deep through me.  
I hold onto the faith You gave me. You showed me You died on the cross, but  
You’ve risen victoriously.”

Hi, I’m Josephine Mary Schmidt, from Songs By Josephine. I’m here with my husband in the Sequoia Redwood National Park, and this is one of the huge sequoia redwoods that is probably over thousand years old. Just incredible. My husband and I came here a couple of years ago, and we are here again filming video clips. It was on my heart to do a message today about life, really. And it’s based on Luke Chapter 13, with the key verse in that chapter is right at the beginning, verse 4. And Jesus is answering people who are wondering in people were worse sinners because they had been murdered, and He responds by saying –

“Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?”

And Jesus responds, “I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.” (Luke 13:5)

Belief starts here. So many tragedies are happening around the world, Covid-19, so many others, and it’s not people’s fault. But belief starts here, at repentance. When we realize the direction of our life isn’t going to reap eternal life. Jesus has come to bring the message of life, and belief starts at repentance. Some people might think that it starts somewhere else. Other Christians have other ideas about when Christianity begins. But God says that belief starts at repentance. When you realize that you are perishing. And this tree here is strong, but it has a life. It’s not indestructible.

After this verse in Luke 13, Jesus goes on and He talks about, He speaks in a parable. And He talks about a fig tree. And it’s been planted in a man’s vineyard, which is a good picture for us. The man has come three years to that fig tree, and it hasn’t given him any fruit. And so, in the man’s anger, he says, “Cut it down!”

But then someone is pleading for that tree, "Leave it alone for one year. Let me dig around it, and fertilize it, and if it bears fruit, fine. But if it doesn't, cut it down."

Jesus has come, sent by the Father that we would be worthy trees in His vineyard. And Jesus is pleading on our behalf, "Don't cut it down, don't destroy it." God wants no one to perish. He wants all to come to repentance, and to rely on His Son, Jesus. This is what Jesus is saying, "I will dig around, and I will fertilize it to enable it to bear your fruit." And I know a little bit about horticulture. I know a little bit about trees and their feeder roots are all on the surface. This is where they get most of their nutrition on this lovely, rich, topsoil. The leaf litter will drop, and birds will manure, and plants will die and woods rots, and the tree gets so much nutrition from this. And this is what Jesus is saying, "I will dig around this tree that is not bearing fruit, and I will fertilize it." In other words, He is cutting all the tree's feeder roots. And that's what He will do in us. He cut off what we are feeding from to enable us to take up His Word. The lessons that He's teaching, like these parables. Jesus wants you to learn from them that you would become strong.

It's starts from repentance, when we know that we are not going to bear the kind of fruit that God is wanting. And what is that fruit? A good tree bears good fruit – love, patience, faithfulness, tenderheartedness, thinking of others better than ourselves. That doesn't come naturally, does it? But it's the selfless nature of Christ that God wants to bear in us. And Jesus wants to help us. You see, He's pleading for us, and He's come to help us. And He doesn't want us to receive the wrath and anger of God. He wants us to reap everlasting life.

But we must turn our ways, and our life that doesn't bear that good fruit, and it starts with repentance and belief.

This Chapter goes on and tells the story about a woman who's crippled, she's bent over, it says. She's been bent over by an evil spirit, it says. And she's been unable to straighten up. She's been like this for eighteen years. But this woman is coming into the Temple. She's coming to worship God. She's coming to church. Yet, she's bound by an evil spirit. And as soon as Jesus sees her, He says, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." But the church leaders were angry that Jesus had done this. Because they had this rule that you couldn't do any work on the

Sabbath, which had nothing to do with God. Jesus helped this woman immediately. And He says to these leaders, “You hypocrites! You held your own livestock, your animals. You look after your own assets, but you don’t help her.” And there are many hypocrites in churches. And they have no power over the Devil.

One of the messages, here, today – who are you listening to? Are you listening to a hypocrite? Or are you listening to someone who is bearing the fruit of Christ?

Then Jesus goes – He asks the questions, “What is the kingdom of God like?” And basically, He’s saying – what is the picture of the kingdom in someone? Because these church leaders are not the picture. They are not even caring about this woman. In fact, they are angry that she’s been healed, which is ridiculous! And Jesus gives this parable in Luke 13, verse 18 of a mustard seed – A man took a mustard seed, and he planted it in his garden, and it grew like a tree and the birds perched in its branches. That’s what God wants; He wants us to take up His food. His Word of God through His Son, Jesus Christ who came to teach the message of life and hope. He wants us to grow strong. Then, the birds can perch in our branches. In other words, we can be useful, we can help others like that crippled woman.

In trees, that’s where the birds sleep at night. They need the trees, and God wants us to be trees helping others become free from Satan’s tactics and schemes. To know the way of salvation. But first we must be released. We must straighten up. We must be released. We have to be those trees that are growing.

Then Jesus gives another example after this one to prove His point even more about this. He asks again – “What else is the kingdom of heaven like,” He says. He gives another example, a woman with yeast, and she’s mixing it into 60 pounds of flour, which is a lot! She mixes it until it’s worked through the dough. And God wants His words and lessons penetrating every aspect of our life. Every, single, aspect of our lives, He wants that truth and the Word of God, His food. So that, we are growing strong and able to help others escape the wrath that is going to come, the anger that is going to come. Remember, the tree that didn’t bear fruit, He said, “Cut it down.” And we have an enemy, trying to keep us bound.

This is our job - a tree has to take up the nutrients, doesn't it? It just can't stand here and expect to be spoon fed when it's all here for them. Trees know, I got to take it up. God's given us the Word, and if you a born-again believer, you have the Spirit and the ability to understand it. And if you are not a born-again, or if you're not sure if you're born-again, then it starts at repentance. That's where belief starts. It can't start anywhere else. It's got to start with you realizing that you need Jesus Christ.

Closing Song – Stuck

“You're stuck in the middle of my heart, in the middle of my life.  
I'm rooted and grounded in your love Christ.”

### **YouTube - Description**

Josephine teaches on Chapter Luke 13 in the Bible and explains the importance of being a Christian feeding on the Word of God and the consequences if we don't. She uses the parables given in this Chapter to explain a life in Christ and how not to be associated with hypocrites that will bring the anger of God.