



DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 4: THE BARREN FIG TREE

Read the Text

Luke 13:1-9

¹There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²And he answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? ³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. ⁴Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

⁶And he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?’ ⁸And he answered him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. ⁹Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

Main Point

What do towers, fig trees, and repentance have to do with each other? In this nuanced passage, Jesus once again reveals the truth about the Kingdom of God. The crowd questions if people’s suffering is proportionate to their sin. We may struggle to some degree with this mindset as well. We may question God and His goodness when we face trials and struggles. But the point Jesus makes is that whether we are in times of trial or times of ease, it’s our heart posture that matters. ***Everything we face in life (whether good or bad) is meant to lead us to repentance and faith in Jesus.***

The concept of repentance is very counter cultural to the non-Christian worldview. Whereas secular culture strives to be a good person and live a good life, as Christians, we believe that our lives are to be marked with repentance since we're aware of how *not* good we are and how *not* good this world is. ***Repentance is the conviction and acceptance that apart from Jesus, we don't deserve anything good.*** At first glance, this can seem negative, cruel, harsh, and unfair. But in reality, it shows just how bad our sin and our fallen world really are. Our sin and the sin of the world is so bad that the only thing that can restore it is the perfection of Jesus, His death in our place, and His resurrection power that symbolizes the end of Satan, sin, and death.

Jesus' parable reveals some really good news. ***God is patient in His final establishment of His Kingdom.*** Like the barren fig tree, He is willing to wait on us to reach a point of repentance and faith in Him. Although He would be perfectly justified in striking us down, He is willing to wait for Jesus to do a work in our hearts to bring us to Him.

Reflect Together

1. When you are in a season of suffering, or face a trial, or don't get something you pray for, how does that influence your perception of who God is and His character?
2. What does leading a life of repentance look like for you? We all have our wins and losses in this area because repentance is incredibly difficult and humbling.
3. Jesus invites us to join Him in the "vine dressing". Is there a non-believer in your life who the Holy Spirit is prompting you to reach? What's a next step you can take in doing that?

Abide Together

In response to question 3, pray for the non-believers in each other's lives. Pray for courage to pursue them, to show them hospitality, and to talk to them about Jesus.