

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 16

Galileans Blood

Luke 13:1 Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

The setting for this passage begins in Luke 12:1. Jesus has just been ousted from a Pharisees' home where He had been invited to dine. The Pharisees vehemently oppose Jesus in everything He teaches. They want to find a way to rid Him from their presence. The report comes to Jesus that Pilate has killed some Galileans and forcefully mingled their blood with their holy sacrifices. This event is not mentioned in any historical records known to date. However, the Lord uses it as an opportunity to address the topic of what to do when people are tragically taken away by sudden death.

Greater Sin

Luke 13:2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were *greater* sinners than all *other* Galileans because they suffered this *fate*? ³ "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. ⁴ "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were *worse* culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? ⁵ "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

The towers had been built in Siloam for safety, yet, they proved to be an instrument of destruction for eighteen men. The Lord wants the listeners to be careful not to equate great suffering with great sin. Jesus uses both circumstances to warn that the sudden removal of someone, or even a group of people, should be a warning and reminder to those who remain on earth to consider carefully their position with the Lord. On this account, Christ instigates a call to repentance. The same Jesus who bids for repentance because the kingdom of heaven is at hand, bids them to repent or otherwise perish. When a tragedy occurs, we should look at our relationship with the Lord and determine if that relationship is in good standing with Him.

Fig Tree

Luke 13:6 And He *began* telling this parable: "A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any. ⁷ "And he said to the vineyard-keeper, 'Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?' ⁸ "And he answered and said to him, 'Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; ⁹ and if it bears fruit next year, *fine*; but if not, cut it down.'"

This parable warns against discarding those who are fruitless. Every teacher has been amazed by the fruit produced by students who failed in their formal education years. At the

same time, they have been disappointed by the lack of fruit of those who had so much potential and did such great and wonderful things in their early years. How quickly we might say, "That child will never amount to anything!" The parent, as well, might find favor with one child while being disappointed by another only to see the roles reversed in the children's adult years. Likewise, look at those who struggle in the Lord in every way, who currently produce no worthwhile fruit, yet, they are constantly feeding on the Word as they seek the knowledge of the Lord. It is a foolish person who seeks biblical counsel from one who is young in the Lord. Strong, solid counsel is found in the one who has walked with the Lord for many years, learning from every possibly situation that exists in life. Those who reach the point in life where the gray hairs begin to show should never be cast away by the younger. Do not be foolish enough to think that the gray-haired old coot cannot relate to the needs of the youngster of this new and hip generation. The reality is that they can relate; they can see the problem early on because of their experiences in the school of hard knocks, sweat, tears, disappointments and mistakes. The young should always seek the counsels of the old who have proved themselves to be steadfast in the Lord, tested, tried and found faithful in every season of their lives.

Furthermore, the older person should never discount the wonder and energy of young people, their zeal to grow, explore, create and perform is essential to their emotional, spiritual and physical growth. The older person should latch on to a young person who desires to know all the facets of the field in which the older one is an expert. The older one should invest and share everything he knows with the younger one. He should stand to the side one day, proud of the younger one and his accomplishments. He should rejoice in the day when the younger person surpasses him in expertise. The older person should help the younger one find a new mentor if he is no longer able to guide the younger person. Greater than all of these areas should be his growth in the knowledge of the Word of God. We should readily guide those who have a desire to gain more knowledge of God down the road of learning and experience.

Healing on Sabbath

Luke 13:10 And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹ And there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all. ¹² When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your sickness." ¹³ And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made erect again and *began* glorifying God. ¹⁴ But the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, *began* saying to the crowd in response, "There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day." ¹⁵ But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water *him*?" ¹⁶ "And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?" ¹⁷ As He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him.

The officials of the synagogue have long since become agitated with Jesus. He has offended them as he has ministered to the people. He has been changing and challenging their long-standing ways of doing things. The officials accuse Jesus of "working on the Sabbath." Is that what He is doing? Is bringing health and healing to one bent over for so many years considered "working?" What about their daily duties on the Sabbath? The animals must be fed and watered. Is that considered work? Often the ones who try to install a new policy are the first to break that policy. In most cases, they are the most flagrant breakers of the policy they have made for others. However, in this case, and in the context of the chapter, the old teachers are holding to that which is not true, and they are indifferent to the truth presented by the young teacher. Although the LORD is the young teacher, the new young teachers of today may be godly, but they are not God. The old and wise teachers will recognize the truth found in the young! They will embrace it if it is of God and will bring the multitudes to the LORD. From their knowledge and experiences of life, they will endorse those things that build the kingdom. If the young teacher strays, they will steer him back on to the roads of sound theology when needed and they will rejoice in the fruit he produces and not be humiliated as is the case with these synagogue officials.

Mustard Seed

Luke 13:18 So He was saying, "What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹ "It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden; and it grew and became a tree, and THE BIRDS OF THE AIR NESTED IN ITS BRANCHES." ²⁰ And again He said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? ²¹ "It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened."

What is the kingdom of heaven like? The Lord gives two examples. First, He presents the example of the mustard seed thrown into the garden. A mustard seed is one of the smallest seeds known to man, yet, it produces a tree big enough for birds of the air to create a safe home among its branches. So, too, our faith in the Lord will cause our body of beliefs to grow as it provides a place of safety for eternity!

Second, the kingdom of God will have the same overwhelming effect in our lives as leaven has in the bread dough. Once the dough is kneaded, it is allowed to rest. During the resting period, the dough will begin to expand slowly until it is many times its original size. So too, the kingdom of God is expanding! Countless souls are being added each day to the kingdom and it is much larger than it was when it began in 30 AD.

Narrow Door

Luke 13:22 And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem. ²³ And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there *just* a few who are being saved?" And He said to them, ²⁴ "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. ²⁵ "Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.' ²⁶ "Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets!'; ²⁷ and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDOERS.' ²⁸ "In that place there will be

weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out. ²⁹ "And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline *at the table* in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ "And behold, *some* are last who will be first and *some* are first who will be last."

From city to city, Jesus is traveling and ministering as He makes His way to Jerusalem. The rest of the text in this chapter indicates that He will arrive in Jerusalem in three days. It indicates that this story is occurring on Friday, March 31, 30 AD according our calendar system.

The Lord has just explained how the kingdom of God will expand in great numbers. With that, He is questioned concerning the number of people who will be saved. As always, the Lord answers the question in a personal manner, focusing His attention on the importance of being part of the kingdom by saying "strive to enter through the narrow door." There may be many ways to worship God, but there is only one way to enter into a relationship with Him and it is through Jesus Christ. It is a narrow door consisting of one Mediator, Jesus Christ Who is the only way into the kingdom. Many others will try to enter by other "so-called" doors, but all lead to doom. No other means allows a relationship with God except putting your belief and trust in the Lord Jesus. By no other name can a man be saved!

Then, answering the question directly, the Lord states that there will be many entering the kingdom from all the ends of the earth and they will all join Him through the one narrow door. His table is large enough for all who enter through the door. However, before becoming too puffed up concerning our place at the table, we must not forget that "to whom much has been given, much is required." Those who do the very best with the little that they are given will be placed at the head of the table. In like manner, those who have been given much will be judged according to their ability and will most likely be seated at the end of the table.

Message to Herod

Luke 13:31 Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, "Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill You." ³² And He said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third *day* I reach My goal.' ³³ "Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next *day*; for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem. ³⁴ "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city* that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen *gathers* her brood under her wings, and you would not *have it!* ³⁵ "Behold, your house is left to you *desolate*; and I say to you, you will not see Me until *the time* comes when you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

Speaking to the Jewish leadership, Jesus instructs the Pharisees to deliver this message to King Herod, "I am going to continue healing and casting our demons for two more days and then I will be in Jerusalem on the third day." On the third day His triumphal entry will

occur. It will be a grand and glorious introduction to the city that will beg for His death by the end of the week.

These events are not without earthly sorrow for Jesus. Jerusalem is a special city that is selected by God to be His city. Today, the Muslims claim it to be their city, but it is not. The Christians claim it to be their city, but it is not. The Jews claim it to be their city, but it is not. The city belongs to the Lord. It will be the place where all religions and representatives from all cultures will gather to collide with the Lord one day. It is a city where all those who belong to the Lord will gather to pass by Him in worship, but for the time being, it is still a primarily rebellious city, alienated from the truth of God. Jesus longs to gather all the inhabitants of Jerusalem under His wings and protect them, but in this city, in this time, in this setting, in this text, very few want to be sheltered in the safety of the Lord. For now, the house of Jerusalem, which consists of the leaders of the religious and governmental functions, has left the people desolate. They are empty! They are the old teachers who are passing on false beliefs, not taking into consideration the truth of the new Teacher, God the Son, and all the goodness that His story, purpose, and message brings to the world. They are leaving their people without hope. They are stirring their people to move far away from the narrow door. In just three days, the people will be shouting, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord," but the brood of vipers, the Pharisees, and other members of the synagogue will not have the same words on their lips. They will be in the backroom of the meetinghouse, away from the sight of the common man, planning how to ambush the Lord of Glory. They will not be saying "blessed is He," as Jesus makes His entry into the holy city, but one day, in the distant future, the hearts of the religious and political leaders will change and look forward to the coming of the Lord to defeat the evil that has come against them. Then they will be crying for His return. When He splits the eastern skies, they will be shouting and singing, "Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord." Then and only then will the leaders in Jerusalem be leading their people through the narrow door and into the kingdom of the Lord.