

Day 149, Luke 13

by David Servant

God's sovereignty and mercy are demonstrated through His patience for sinners to repent and His offer of forgiveness of sins to everyone.

Scripture: Luke 13:1-34

Topics: "Gods Mercy", "Repentance Needed"

Description

David Servant preaches on the balance between God's justice and mercy, emphasizing that while tragedies may be a result of sin, God's mercy is extended to give time for repentance. He highlights the importance of not mistaking God's mercy for approval and the need for repentance to avoid judgment. Jesus' teachings and actions show that God is the ultimate healer, even when afflictions are caused by spiritual forces. The parables of the mustard seed and leaven illustrate the growth of God's kingdom and the eventual separation of the repentant from the unrepentant. Jesus emphasizes the necessity of holiness for salvation and the call for genuine repentance for all.

Transcript

Apparently, two contemporary tragedies during the time of Jesus' ministry had people talking. For some reason unknown to us, Pilate had ordered the execution of certain Galileans who had come to Jerusalem to make sacrifices. Also, a tower in Siloam had collapsed and killed 18 men. Believing that God is sovereign, people assumed that those who had perished deserved their fates, and they were correct. Yet they wrongly assumed that those who hadn't perished were undeserving of such a fate. Although God's passive wrath upon sinners may have been demonstrated in those two tragic events, God's mercy was demonstrated to an even greater degree, in that there were so many who were still alive. They were, quite mercifully, being given time to repent, as are all unrepentant humans who are still breathing.

This same concept is well illustrated by Jesus' parable of the unfruitful fig tree. There is always tension between justice and mercy, and with God, mercy overcomes justice for a time. God works to influence sinners to repent, and He patiently waits for them to change. Eventually, however, His patience wears out, and then judgment falls. So everyone should be cautious that they don't mistake God's mercy for His approval. Jesus warned His audience of that very thing, calling them to repent or ultimately perish (13:3, 5).

All this being so, the oft-asked question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" reveals a flawed understanding about people. Since, as Jesus once said, "No one is good except God alone" (Mark 10:18),

a better question to ask would be, "Why does anything good happen to anyone, since all people deserve God's immediate wrath?"

Take note that the sickness of the woman who was "bent double" was "caused by a spirit" (13:11). Moreover, Jesus said that Satan had bound her for 18 years (13:16). Then He, whom according to Peter "went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38), laid His hands on her and healed her. So Satan is the one who causes sickness; God is the healer! Let's not forget that. Certainly Scripture teaches us that God may permit Satan to afflict someone with sickness as a means of His punishment or discipline. But if any of us is sick for those reasons, then it stands to reason that our repentance would open the door to healing, and that sickness is not God's perfect will for us.

The parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven both illustrate the same concept. Although God's kingdom on earth during Christ's day was quite small (as those who had submitted to God's kingship were a tiny minority), one day God's kingdom will rule the earth, as the redeemed from all the ages will live in peace together there, and all unrepentant rebels will be forever banished. So rejoice! We're still a minority, but not forever.

Did Jesus believe that holiness is required to gain entrance into heaven? Apparently so, as He said that the door to salvation is narrow (13:24), and warned that He would one day say to some who would attempt to gain entrance, "Depart from Me, all you evildoers" (13:27). That will include church-going evildoers, Bible-quoting evildoers and born-again evildoers. Of course, as we've already discussed, all are evildoers before they turn from their sins. Yet the greatest deception is that of people who have "become Christians," and who have conformed their lives to the same degree as others who have "become Christians," but very little changes in their behavior. They are now opposed to abortion and attend church services. But they are still greedy, lustful liars and thieves.

Did Jesus want everyone to repent? Is it possible for everyone to repent? Did Jesus offer forgiveness of sins to everyone; or was it only offered to a few whom God pre-selected? Jesus' lament over Jerusalem reveals the answers. He did not say, "O a few in Jerusalem, a few in Jerusalem....How often I wanted to gather just a few of your children together, unlike a hen gathers her entire brood under her wings, but God has not yet zapped you few chosen ones with some irresistible grace!" (13:34)

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