

The Barren Fig Tree

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[0:00] Luke chapter 13. We'll read the first nine verses. Luke 13, verse 1. Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

! Jesus answered, Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you too will all perish.

Or those 18 who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them, do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you too will all perish.

Then he told this parable. A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any.

Cut it down. Why should it use up the soil? Sir, the man replied, leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine.

[1:23] If not, then cut it down. Unexpected and sudden death. It happens all the time, doesn't it?

A car accident. No one leaves home in the morning and says, Goodbye, dear, I'm going to be killed today in a car accident. It happens suddenly, unexpectedly.

And so do many other deaths. A plane that goes down. A tornado. An earthquake. A tsunami. A flood. In many ways, men are suddenly and unexpectedly swept into eternity without any forewarning.

These things fill the newspapers and are on the evening news. Well, it was just such a situation that some came to report to Jesus.

Evidently, some Galilean Jews had gone up to the temple in Jerusalem to offer their sacrifices. And while they were in the very act of sacrificing, in the very act of worship, Pilate ordered his soldiers to attack them, and they fell upon them and slaughtered them such that their blood was mixed with their sacrifices.

[2:45] Now, we don't know any more of the details of that situation, but it was certainly not out of character for Pilate. He was known for his many massacres. Well, these died unexpectedly, suddenly, while in an act of worship.

It would be like being gunned down ten minutes into this sermon. We didn't come here expecting that to happen. And yet it did happen. And Jesus knew the prevailing idea in Israel was that such sudden disasters fell upon people who were especially wicked.

And so as this news was being reported, the people are saying to themselves, Ooh, what a gruesome way to die. Those Galileans must have been especially wicked to have been cut down so suddenly.

And Jesus chops down this wrong thinking at once. Do you think, he says to them, that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way?

Yes, they thought that. I tell you, no. No. But unless you repent, you all will perish too. You're no less guilty than they are.

[4:11] And unless you repent, you too will likewise perish. And it may be in a similar way, suddenly and unexpectedly. And since you don't know when or how you will die, you ought to repent.

And repent at once. And then Jesus emphasizes this point by referring to another disaster that was in the recent news.

The Pool of Siloam. You remember that pool spoken of in the Gospels where people would go to be healed. It was right alongside the wall, the outer wall of Jerusalem.

And on top of that wall was a defensive tower from which they could view and even shoot down upon their enemies. Well, after that tower had stood there for centuries, one day without any warning, it suddenly fell and crushed and killed 18 people who were down below.

And Jesus brings this news item up and says, those 18 who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them, do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?

[5 : 32] I tell you no. But unless you repent, you too will all perish. You see, twice he says the same thing. This is important.

He's repeating it for emphasis. Don't miss it. The sudden disasters and deaths are urgent calls to all men to repent.

Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. It's a call to stop going your own way and to turn and to go God's way.

To come to his Christ. To come to his ways. And to forsake your own. Are you getting that message? As the news is full of this sort of thing.

Are you learning from these sudden disasters that happen to others? So, another tower at Notre Dame falls over.

[6 : 31] And a young man with a future in front of him that he was planning is suddenly rushed into eternity. Did you get the message from Jesus?

That unless you repent, you too will all perish. Did you hear him? Did you do anything about it? Did it move you to repent? Did you consider what if it had been me?

Where would I be today? That's how we're to improve these disasters that suddenly come upon people in our world. How to personally benefit from them.

Jesus' message is that by birth, we're all sinners. And we've gone astray. And our backs are toward God. And our faces are toward our way.

And at the end of our way is disaster. Destruction is hell. And unless we repent, unless we turn to God in Jesus Christ, an eternal disaster awaits us.

[7 : 40] And I say, isn't Jesus good to warn us about that? And isn't he good in every such disaster to send another warning about that great eternal disaster?

Well, these calls to repent had special application to the Jewish nation. They were his immediate audience that day as Jesus was standing there teaching.

They were living for themselves. They were going astray from God. They were guilty. They deserved hell. They were rejecting their Messiah.

And the nation as a whole was heading straight for destruction. And yet they think that they're okay. They're certainly not like those very bad sinners on whom the tower fell.

Who got chopped down in the midst of worship. And Jesus says, no, my friends. It's not like that at all. It's not like you think at all.

[8 : 47] It's not just a few that are in this danger. It's not just 18 here and a couple dozen there. It's all of you. The whole nation.

That unless you repent, you too will likewise perish. That was the message of the Old Testament prophets.

That was the message of John the Baptist. Repent. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. It was the message of the Lord Jesus himself. Repent or perish.

And now we come to the parable. We're studying the parables of Jesus. Notice verse 6 starts. Then he told this parable.

So with repent or perish still burning in their ears, Jesus now tells them a parable that will drive home the very same lesson.

[9 : 48] Only now with a story. Once upon a time a man had a fig tree. Now fig trees were very common.

And still are in Israel. Some of you don't even know what a fig is. You need to have your mother buy fig newtons. And you'll... That's the stuff inside. It's figs.

It's good. It's sweet. And that was a common tree in Israel and a common treat for the family. It was the most fruitful of all their trees.

And there are many Bible references to fig trees. Now it's important to notice where this fig tree was planted. It was planted in his vineyard.

Now that was the choicest spot on the whole property. It was specially favored, privileged ground. Here in the confines of the vineyard was the best soil.

[10:47] Here was to be found the best care for the plants found anywhere on the estate. Often a wall would be built around a vineyard to keep out wild animals and other things that would come in like straying kids and such to come in and take some of the fruit of the land of the owner.

So special care was taken for this vineyard. A wall. Good soil. Far more care given to it than any tree planted out in the wayside.

To be planted in the vineyard was to enjoy the most advantages for fruit bearing anywhere on the farm. Now, the spiritual meaning of this parable.

Let's begin by saying that the man with the fig tree is God. And this favored fig tree planted in the vineyard was Israel.

The nation of Israel. Indeed, in places in the Old Testament there are places where Israel is referred to under the symbol of a fig tree.

[11:59] In Hosea and in Joel. Israel was that favored nation, wasn't she? To her was given special privileges, spiritual privileges that no one outside of those walls enjoyed.

No other nation. Out of all the world's nations, God chose them to be His own. He redeemed them out of Egypt and He planted them in His promised land.

That special favored people. So Moses is able to say to them in Deuteronomy 4, 7 and 8, what other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way that the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to Him?

And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? Paul does the same thing in the New Testament.

In Romans chapter 9 when he speaks of the special advantages of the Jews. Theirs is the adoption as sons. That special relationship with God in which He's the Father and they're like His sons.

[13:15] Theirs is the adoption as sons. Theirs is the divine glory. We remember it shining out from the most holy place and from the cloud. Theirs is the covenants.

Theirs is the receiving of the law. Theirs is the temple worship. Theirs is the promises. Theirs is the patriarchs. Theirs is the human ancestry of Messiah.

To be God's special people, His covenanted people was to be planted in the most favored spot of all. So Israel is the favored fig tree planted in the vineyard of God's kingdom.

And yet, if we only applied this parable to Israel, we would be remiss because we would, all of us, go away missing its application to us because we're not the Jews.

You see, the Old Testament Jews are not the only ones who have lived with special spiritual privileges. advantages. And this fig tree represents all who have received special spiritual advantages that are not given to others.

[14:30] So let me ask you, do you have a Bible? Kids, do you have a Bible? Or easy access to one? Well, that's more than 40% of the world's population this morning can say.

They don't have Bibles. Week by week, we read of these unreached peoples, don't we? Over 2,000 languages are without a Bible.

But though many have it in their language, such as the Persians have it in Farsi, yet many will never see one of those Bibles.

They're forbidden books. They're banned books like the 11 million who live in Saudi Arabia and the Bible is a banned book in that whole country. And so it is in many Muslim lands.

But you have a Bible? You're kidding me. You have Bibles? Oh, what a favored position you have in the world. Do you know any other Christians?

[15:43] Christians? Well, a third of the world's population live and die without ever even knowing a Christian.

Our missionary David Vaughn, for whom we prayed this morning in France, has told us of the many that he meets who say, I do not know a single Christian.

And they live and die without knowing anyone who's a Christian. Do you know any Christians?

Some of you grew up in a Christian home.

You did. You grew up in a Christian home. You mean you've had somebody who knew Jesus from the day of infancy? Oh, especially favored sinners indeed.

Do you sit under the word of God in Sunday school and in the worship of the church?

[16:45] Oh, favored sinners to have Christ so often put before you in his life, his death, his burial, his resurrection, his ascension, his present reign, his soon coming. Hundreds and hundreds of times some of you have had the way of salvation lovingly pressed upon you.

And you're in a church not just with a Bible but where you have the gospel because you know there are gospels that are no gospels at all, Paul says. But no, you're in a church where you know the true gospel that you're saved not by any works of righteousness that you have done but through the works of Jesus done on behalf of sinners.

sinners. Oh, can you not see you are planted in the most special favored soil in the whole estate? All of us here are like this favored fig tree planted in the vineyard with special privileges given to us. We cannot dodge the application of this parable simply because we're not Jews.

In fact, I would say that our privileges today are greater than any Jew has ever had. Now, no man plants a fig tree just for the fun of it.

[18:11] No, if he plants a fig tree he wants fruit. He's looking for figs. So when this vineyard owner in Jesus' story planted this fig tree in his vineyard he did it because he wanted figs.

That means then that he's expecting fruit. And when the season comes for bearing fruit this owner comes to his vineyard and he looks for figs on this fig tree.

But he's disappointed it. Because all he finds is leaves. There's no fruit. I'm told a fig tree cannot always be told from a distance whether it has fruit or not.

You have to come and many times the fruit is under the leaf. And so he comes and he inspects but he finds no fruit. And perhaps he thought well surely the following year will be better.

But that year too he was constantly looking for fruit but to no avail. There was no figs on the tree.

And so patiently he waits yet another year in hope but his waiting is again in vain for each time he comes and pushes back the leaves he finds no figs on his tree.

[19:32] Well that was it. He would now act decisively. And he says to the vineyard keeper for three years now I've been coming constantly to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any.

Cut it down why should it continue to use up the soil? Patience is not prudent effective and this barren fig tree is worse than useless.

It's one thing to be useless it's another thing to be worse than useless. Why is it worse than useless? Well in the first place not only did it fail itself to bring forth fruit to its owner but secondly it used up valuable space in the vineyard that could be given to another tree that would bear fruit to the owner.

And thirdly its roots were drawing moisture and nutrients from the ground that other plants in the vineyard would otherwise enjoy.

It just keeps depleting the soil of its nutrients. It's always receiving receiving receiving and it gives nothing back. Cut it down why should it keep on using up the soil?

[20:56] And here we come to lesson number one in the parable where God gives spiritual privileges He expects fruit in return.

So He comes to the Jews expecting to find fruit. You say what kind of fruit? Well He expects to find faith doesn't He? Faith in Him without which it's impossible to please Him.

Faith that takes Him at His word. Faith that believes His promises. Faith that trusts in His Messiah. He comes expecting the fruit of obedience to His commands.

All of them keeping His laws even if they went against their desires personally or their thoughts. He comes seeking the fruit of repentance to change their ways to quit going their own way to turn from their evil ways and to return to Him and His way and to His Christ.

He expects the fruit of love that they will love Him with all their heart soul mind and strength. They will give to Him the chief place of their hearts.

[22:07] They'll count Him as their chief treasure and want Him more than anything else giving Him the undivided loyalty of their hearts. That's the fruit He expects back for all the privileges He's been dumping into this people.

And the fruit of worship in spirit and in truth He expects that from them that they will revere Him and hold Him in awe and in esteem and that they will bring Him glory the fruit of lips that praise His name.

That's what He expects from the Jews and had every reason to expect from a people that He had treated with such unmerited kindness and privileges.

but instead He finds them stubbornly going their own way. Will not turn face set against Him unwilling to repent refusing to trust Him having other loves and seeking their own pleasure and honor their hearts given to idols God substitutes and so He came yes He came seeking fruit and He came to His own but His own received Him not.

And He finds none of the fruit that was more than His due. Well that was the Jews but what about you? All of you special favored people where God gives spiritual privileges He expects fruit in return to whom much is given much will be required.

[23 : 45] So has He given you a Bible? then He comes with a special eye on your Bible to see what you are doing with it.

Are you treasuring it? Are you reading it? Are you meditating on it? Are you memorizing it? Where spiritual privileges are given He expects fruit in return.

Are you believing it? Are you obeying it? You have the gospel. You know what God requires for your salvation. Have you obeyed the gospel? Have you fled from any righteousness of your own and any sins of your own and come to Jesus to be saved by Him from sin?

You have the gospel. What are you doing with it to take it to others? To see that gospel go to others who are still in darkness? To whom much is given much will be required. Has He given you Christian parents?

He comes looking for fruit. He expects you to honor and respect and to obey your parents. To do what they say without complaining.

[24 : 58] You who from infancy have known the holy scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Are you saved?

Are you saved? saved? He's watching. What are you doing with these privileges? He's given you a Christian church? Then He's watching to see what you're doing with it.

Do you love its worship? Are you faithful in its attendance? Are you one of those who forsakes the assembling of yourselves as some are in the habit of doing?

What are you doing with God's people? Are you loving them? Are you serving the church of Jesus?

What are you doing for their welfare?

Do you pray with them? Do you pray for them? Do you treasure their fellowship or seek your close friendships in the world? He's coming seeking fruit from you upon whom He's dumping daily dumping spiritual privileges.

[26 : 10] That means every time that you hear His word He's expecting a return of fruit from you. He comes to see what you'll do with it.

That means He's expecting fruit in your life from this sermon this morning. From that Sunday school class that many of us have just come out of. He's expecting fruit from that.

It wasn't just an ordinance that we went through the motions. No, He's given privilege. Now He's expecting fruit. Where your thoughts and words and actions, where your affections and priorities are out of line with the word that He brings to you, He's expecting you to repent.

That is to change your thoughts, the way you think about something, to change your actions. To stop your sinful habits, to start godly habits.

He's expecting you to reorder your priorities. He's expecting you to remove idols from your life that are taking His place. He's expecting to reject temptation, to reject the world.

[27 : 31] He comes expecting the fruit of repentance. repentance. And He doesn't just come while the word's being preached. He'll come tomorrow to your tree to see if it's bearing fruit.

He'll come on Saturday. He'll come a month from now to see if this word is bringing forth any fruit in your life. You see, it's easy to be moved under the preaching of the word.

Jesus acknowledges that in another parable on the ministry of the word and the sower. forever. But He's not just looking for the leaves of bare profession.

Nor is He looking for the blossom. The blossom that promises much. Oh, man, I need to change in this area of my life. I now see what God's word says clearly.

I'm out of line with that. I've got to change. And He can even hear us promising much in this place and resolving much and even see us beginning. but He comes later.

[28 : 33] You see, He's looking not for leaves or blossoms. He's looking for the mature fruit of repentance. Is she still turning? Is He still turning from His way? It's real repentance He's after.

Real change. Persevering genuine holiness. True love and devotion to Him. Not just our words. Not in perfection.

But when we fall, He's looking for real repentance. To own what we've done. And to set our hearts again on His will. Brothers and sisters, we live on favored ground.

Every one of us here live on favored ground, unknown to most in the world today. What fruit is He finding in us? Are you denying yourself?

Are you taking up your cross every day and following Jesus? Many have great spiritual blessings who have nothing but the leaves of outward religion.

[29 : 42] He comes expecting fruit. Lesson number two, it's not safe to remain unfruitful under spiritual privileges. It's not safe. Notice what happens to a fig tree that continues unfruitful under the best conditions.

The owner finally comes to the point where he says, cut it down. Why should it use up the soil? Why should it keep receiving and receiving my kindnesses and giving no fruit back?

Now, the Lord Jesus is just hammering home His earlier words. I tell you, know, that unless you repent, you will all what? You'll perish. Now He's putting it in a story.

You'll be cut down. It's the same thing. Speaking of the eternal torment that awaits those who refuse to repent when He favors them with spiritual blessing.

And the lesson is found all over our Bibles. In Matthew 21, Jesus is walking along and He sees a fruit tree and He goes over to get fruit and there is nothing but leaves on that tree and He curses the fig tree and it immediately withers to the surprise of the disciples.

[30 : 47] Why? Because it did not bear fruit. It was cursed. Luke 3 and verses 8 and 9, John the Baptist is preaching and he says, produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

Don't just say, I repent. Show by your life. Produce fruit that shows true repentance. Because the axe is already at the root of the trees.

I mean, we're close to being cut down. Here's the tree and here's the axe. It's right there, John's saying. The axe is already at the root of the trees and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire.

Jesus says in John 15, He cuts off every branch in me that does not bear fruit. Such branches are picked up and thrown into the fire. You see, if you are one who is under spiritual privileges and are not producing fruit, you're in great danger.

Israel as a nation was in great danger. They had long received the special care of the Lord and yet had refused to bear fruit to His glory and He simply will not settle for non-fruit bearing trees in His vineyard.

[32 : 01] They'd better repent at once. That's Jesus' message here. But oh, then we hear a second person in the parable, a vineyard keeper, the one who takes care every day of these fig trees and vines in his vineyard.

The vineyard keeper pleads for just a little more time, doesn't he? Sir, leave it alone for one more year. I'll dig around it, loosen up the ground around its roots, and I'll pour in manure and fertilize it well.

And if it bears fruit, fine. That's what we're after, right? Right? If not, then cut it down.

Then cut it down. Jesus says the only thing between the axe and the tree is the intercession and pleadings for mercy.

Perhaps it's a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, without whose intercession all of us would have been cut down long ago and have been in hell.

[33 : 11] At least this much is a reference to the mercy of God. The patience, the amazing patience of God that He bears with favored sinners who receive His spiritual light and truth without bearing fruit in return.

I'll dig around it and fertilize it and give it every advantage for one more brief season. It's not an eternal reprieve. It's just the rest of this year.

Just this one more year. And then cut it down. Now, this points to the special attention given to the Jews at the end of their existence as a nation.

It was John the Baptist who came and dug around the roots and loosened up the soil. And it was Jesus Christ in His preaching who poured in the manure and fertilized it.

in the preaching of the apostles. Over the last 50 years of this nation's existence, they had received special, special care and concern.

[34 : 22] And Jesus is announcing Israel's last opportunity to repent before God's judgment falls and the axe chops down their tree.

Unless speedy national repentance followed, the whole nation would perish. But one after another they rejected and persecuted and killed all these servants who were sent to dig them up and fertilize them.

They still refused to repent. They proved fruitless. And it left no other option but to cut it down. And that's lesson number three.

God is patient, but His patience does not last forever. If it's abused, it will be replaced by His wrath. And they showed contempt for the riches of His kindness.

They showed contempt for the riches of His tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness was meant to bring them to repentance. But because of their stubbornness and unrepentant heart, they were storing up wrath for the day of God's wrath and the revelation of His righteous judgment.

[35 : 32] judgment. Remember the parable of the tenants. That the landowner had these tenants farming his land for him and then when harvest came, he sent his servants to receive the fruit that was rightly due to him as the owner.

And you remember they persecuted and killed even his son that he sent. And Jesus says, therefore, I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you.

Speaking to the Jews, He's announcing this to the Jews. The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. again to the nation of Israel here in chapter 13 verses 34 and 35.

Jesus says, Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you. How often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate, destroyed, ruined, perished.

[36 : 49] And as he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, if you even you had only known on this day what would bring you peace, prosperity, but now it is hidden from your eyes.

The days will come when you upon you, when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground.

You and the children within your walls, they will not leave one stone on another because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you. I came seeking fruit and you brought me none.

You didn't bring me faith. You didn't bring me repentance. You didn't bring me love. You didn't bring me worship. You didn't bring me glory. You will be cut down. It was only 40 years after Jesus said this that the Romans under Titus came down and surrounded Jerusalem and dashed their people to the ground and brought down every stone, destroyed them.

Destroy them. And the nation of Israel perished. The barren fig tree was cut down and the nation perished even as Jesus had warned.

[38 : 14] And that brings us to the fourth lesson. Those who do not repent will perish. That's what Jesus has just said in plain words in verses 1 to 5.

Now, what this parable tells us about God doesn't change. So if we can learn something about God from this parable, then it applies to us as much as it ever applied to the Jews.

Because He remains the same. And that's what we're highlighting in these lessons. We're not looking at things that are peculiar just to God's relation to it.

We're asking, what is the nature of God? Well, it is such that wherever He gives spiritual privileges, He expects fruit in return. And it is still not safe to remain unfruitful under spiritual privileges.

Because God, though God's patience is amazing, God's patience is not forever. And where His patience is abused and men continue without repenting, judgment will finally come and will be worse because of all the spiritual blessings.

[39 : 30] Remember what Jesus said? It will be more tolerable on that day for Sodom and Gomorrah. And for you. You. You who have had me in your presence and have seen my works and have heard my words.

These things have to do with us today. And in so many of Jesus' parables, this one is without an ending, isn't it?

Well, what happened? There's that fig tree and it doesn't have any fruit. Three years and they're giving it one last year. They're digging. They're doing all that. But there's no ending to it, is there? And it's, I believe it's the master storyteller turning the thing right on us. How will your last chapter be written? You fig tree. You fig tree.

You fig tree. You sitting under the favored blessings of God. How will your last chapter, your conclusion, be written? God comes looking for fruit.

[40 : 31] What's he finding this morning? Are you bearing fruit in line with the gospel? Are you living for him or still living for yourself? If you're not repenting, repenting, and I say that in the continuing sense, if you're not repenting, how long will he spare you?

Martin Luther was right. Repentance is not something you do once when you first come to Christ. But it is something that you will need to do every day of your life until heaven. Because it's only in heaven that sin is no more.

And until then, it's every day repenting. And he brings spiritual blessing and light to us. And our response is to repent and to bring into line with his word whatever is amiss and out of line and out of priority and out of place in our hearts and lives to repent of it and to bring it to the foot of the cross and to say, Lord Jesus, I believe your word that you suffered enough for the punishment of this sin in my life.

I exercise fresh faith upon your righteousness and your blood and I cry out for your help, your strength to turn my ways back into your ways.

Turn my heart and I will be turned. Heal me and I will be healed. This parable tells me that we little realize how offensive it is to God to have him continually giving us privileges without fruit in return.

[42 : 15] And we just keep taking it in, right? It happens every week. We come every day. We have the Bible. We have this. We have that. It's just another day. God doesn't see it that way.

It is highly offensive that upon planting us in that favored spot of privilege. That we go on day after day after day without fruits of repentance.

I wonder how long, how long was God patient with you, favored ones? How long was it?

Some of you went way beyond just three years as in the parable. Some of you here still haven't come into Christ. And you're way past that initial period of time.

You're well into that last year perhaps. How do you know how much time he will give you? Before he says, that's it.

[43 : 22] Cut it down. Cut him down. Cut her down. Why should she cumber the soil anymore? Who knows but this very service is the last digging and fertilizing that God will give.

Before he gives you up, never again does his spirit strive in your heart. He just turns you over. to your own sinful ways. Repent at once.

That's the message. That Jesus is passionately giving to his original hearers and to any who have been recipients of spiritual privileges. There's no wrath like that of abused patients.

Oh, come and confess your sin to Christ and receive his atonement and his forgiveness at once. One day the last gospel opportunity will pass.

Men will die in their sins and be lost forever. They will perish in the words of the Bible. An eternal ruin without remedy.

[44 : 34] And so it caused someone to write. I mean, do you know where that line is? Do you know where that last digging and fertilizing is? Before he gives you over?

Someone writes. There is a line by us unseen that crosses every path. the hidden boundary between God's patience and his wrath.

Oh, where is that mysterious line by which our paths are crossed? Beyond which God himself has sworn that he who goes is lost.

How far can one go on in sin? How long will mercy spare? Where does grace end? And where begin the confines of despair?

An answer from the skies is sent. Ye who from God depart. While it is called today repent and harden not your heart.

[45 : 39] Isn't it wonderful that Jesus comes warning while his mercy is still available? Oh, look at the urgency in Jesus' words and in his heart this morning.

He would receive you. Harden not your heart while it is called today repent. That's lesson number five. Seek the Lord while he may be found.

Call on him while he's near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord and he will have mercy upon him. And to our God for he will freely pardon. Don't play Russian roulette with your soul young person. Older person. Where is that line? You don't know. So seek him today. Seek him today.

And dear believers. Dear believers. Let us magnify the mercy and patience of God that waited for us. How long did he dig and fertilize?

[46:46] How long did he pour light in upon our hearts? How long did he come looking for fruit only to find nothing but leaves?

He spared us. Oh, what is the intercession? The worth of the Lord Jesus to us. What is the mercy of God that's been shown to us? Let's glorify him this day for his mercy.

Let us say we have spent enough time fruitless. It's high time to bear more fruit for the Lord. This is why God is so intent upon fruit from the trees that he puts in his vineyard.

Because as Isaiah says, we are plantings of the Lord for the display of his splendor. We are plantings of the Lord. He has put us into Christ.

And it's for the display of his splendor. Have we had such favor as to be placed into Christ? Why have we been put in this fertile ground? Why have we been joined and cut into this healthy vine?

[47:58] It's that we might display his splendor. His glory is at stake. He seeks glory from us, from the fruit of holy lives.

And John 15, 5 holds the key to fruit bearing. I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit.

For apart from me, you can do nothing. That's the key to bearing fruit. Remaining in Christ, abiding in him, fellowship with Jesus, walking with the Lord Jesus, well, let the mercies of God lead us to repentance and lead us to bearing more fruit, coming to him and offering up ourselves afresh to him.

Crying out to make us more fruitful. Let's take the spiritual privileges that we have and make the most out of them.

Not, what's the bare minimum I can do with this privilege? No, what's the most fruit I can bring back to God for the Bible? What's the most fruit that I can produce for having given me the gospel?

[49:11] For having given me this gospel church? Gospel brothers and sisters? What's the most fruit? Let's not let a sermon pass, a Sunday school pass, without asking, what fruit will this bear in my life?

Do you ever, on Monday, come back to Sunday and say, now, what did I hear yesterday? What fruit can be born to my Savior from that word that he dug up and fertilized me with yesterday?

That's why we pray over the word heard on Wednesday night. Lord, don't let us, don't let us forget what we heard. We want to be more than hearers. We want to be doers. We want to be fruit bearers.

Make every effort to be holy, to reject temptation, to put sin to death, to love God with all of our heart and our neighbor as ourself. Every day, live for him.

Every day, full of opportunities for bearing fruit to his glory, to his splendor. So may we bear fruit to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the very one who enables us in mercy to do so.

[50:28] Let's pray. Living God, you have known us, you have searched us, you have found us.

There's nothing hidden that is not revealed. Lord, just a moment's reflection tells us that we're planted in some pretty special soil, that we have light in a world that sits in darkness.

And so right away we see ourselves as this fig tree in the vineyard. And you have every right to expect that having given us such mercy and such love, when we deserve the opposite, that we should be every day yielding the fruit of praise and worship and love and obedience.

So forgive us of our sin. Forgive us that we're so forgetful of our favored blessings. Forgive us that we're still so barren.

Lord, none have had more spiritual privileges than I. None have sinned against greater privilege than I. Have mercy on me. And come and help me.

[51:48] To be a tree that bears the lovely fruit of the Lord Jesus, His love, joy, peace, and patience, and kindness, and goodness, and faithfulness, and gentleness, and self-control.

Do it for all of us who know you. And don't let anything of the pressure of truth up from the hearts of those that are still sucking in your favors without bringing you the fruit of faith and repentance. and press them this day to at once get into Christ. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.