

**Time is Limited**  
**Luke 12:54-13:9**

As we begin this morning I want us to think about: What kind of urgency should we have when it comes to living for Christ? How serious should we be about seeking him? We all know God wants us to live for him, but there are a lot of things going on in our lives – is it ok to be complacent in our faith?

As I've gotten older I've seen my To Do List just keep getting longer – there are all kinds of things I need to do – car repairs and maintenance, house projects, fixing something, planning a trip, painting a room, yard work... But I've also seen that my motivation to do those things is really low. I spend all my time doing the things that I think are more important and I get so busy that when I have a spare evening, the last thing I want to do is tackle something on my list. I just want to take a break. So things go undone. I'll get to them eventually...

How about when it comes to our relationship with God? Some of us may treat our relationship with God like something we push further and further down our list. We'll get serious about our faith at some point, but for now we're going to wait – there's too much else to do. We get complacent, distracted, focused on doing our own thing – drifting through life without much thought to the things of God.

This morning we're going to look at several verses that will show us why that's a dangerous place to be. All of us are going to go through times of complacency in our lives, but it's during those times that we have an important choice to make: Are we going to stay there and keep drifting, or fight to turn things around and light the fire again?

We are wrapping up a series of teachings in Luke 12 & 13 that Jesus gave to a group of people in Judea and the verses we're going to look at today all seem to relate to the same thing, which was a wakeup call to the people who were listening – a call to repentance – to turn away from their sins and devote themselves fully to God.

From what I understand, repentance wasn't normally on their minds because most of them didn't think they needed it. They were already Israelites, the chosen people of God, and it was assumed that if they were observing the law and

sacrifices, and participating in the various ceremonies and feasts, that God would be pleased with them. It was only the rebellious, wicked Jews or pagan Gentiles that had need of repentance. So they didn't necessarily think they needed to get serious about the Lord. Many were complacent, like many Christians today.

Jesus had a much different attitude and we see that in these verses.

Read Luke 12:54-56.

*<sup>54</sup> He also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming.' And so it happens. <sup>55</sup> And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat,' and it happens. <sup>56</sup> You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"*

So he criticizes them for not knowing what was going on or what was coming in the spiritual realm. They knew how to tell what kind of weather was on its way, but they didn't know how to understand what God was doing. Jesus was right there in front of their eyes, bringing to fulfillment all the prophecies and promises of the Messiah in the Old Testament. But they were spiritually dull and didn't see it. Most would never receive him. Most would never repent. They didn't know what was coming. So Jesus continued with a warning that pointed to what it was.

Read Luke 12:57-59.

*<sup>57</sup> "And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? <sup>58</sup> As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. <sup>59</sup> I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny."*

I don't think he was just giving them practical advice about a worldly lawsuit, I think he was warning them about God's judgment that was coming. He was telling them to get right before God before it was too late. I think Jesus is comparing himself to the accuser in this analogy – in his earthly ministry he was confronting sin and calling people to repentance and here he was saying that in the same way a guilty offender should settle with their accuser before getting to court, they should repent and get right with God before they faced judgment. Every day that passed was a day they were getting closer to judgment, and once they got to the

divine courtroom it would be too late. They'd be condemned to an eternal prison. It would be foolish to wait.

At that point some people brought up something terrible that happened to some people from Galilee as they were visiting Jerusalem and Jesus used that to continue to warn them...

Luke 13:1-5

*There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. <sup>2</sup> And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? <sup>3</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. <sup>4</sup> Or 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? <sup>5</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."*

The first tragedy they brought up appears to have been a terrible event where Pilate murdered some people from Galilee who had come to Jerusalem. He either murdered them in the temple courtyard so that their blood mingled with the sacrifices, or murdered them elsewhere and brought their blood into the temple and poured it on the altar. We could compare it to one of the mass shootings that happens in churches today. People died without warning.

And Jesus asked the people, "Do you think they suffered in that way because they were worse sinners than anyone else? Is that why they died? No." I think he wanted them to see that the same thing could have happened to any of them. Those people died in a terrible and unexpected tragedy and the same thing could happen to them. He gave another example of a tower that fell without warning and killed 18 people. None of them had any idea they would die that day, but they did. It was sudden and unexpected and they had no time to get their affairs in order or to repent. The same thing could happen to them.

Jesus told them, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." I don't think he's talking about getting murdered or crushed from a falling tower. I think he's talking about the fact that those people died without warning, and no time to repent. Therefore, whatever their spiritual condition was at the time, was where they were at when they went to see their Maker. If the people didn't repent, that's

what would happen to them. They would come face to face with God and it would be too late. It makes us wonder: If a shooter came in here this morning, would you be ready to meet God? If a car swerves and hits you head on when you're driving home from church today, will you be ready? Many people are not. "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

You can see how these things tie together: We need to wake up and be aware of what's going on and what's coming. We are on our way to the divine courtroom to stand before the Judge and now is the time to settle with our accuser. Now is the time to repent, because none of us knows what day will be our last or when we will stand before our Maker.

Jesus wrapped up with one final warning.

Luke 13:6-9

*<sup>6</sup>And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. <sup>7</sup>And 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?' <sup>8</sup>And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. <sup>9</sup>Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"*

I think this fig tree represents the people of Israel. They had been brought back from exile and replanted in the Promised Land, but they weren't producing fruit and were going to be cut down. They weren't truly living for God and walking in obedience to him as a light among the nations.

The vinedresser appears to be Jesus. In his three years of ministry he was giving spiritual nourishment to the people so they would produce fruit. God was giving them grace and time to repent and turn to him through faith in Jesus. But that opportunity wouldn't last forever. If they didn't repent, they would be cut down. God was patient, but eventually time would run out and he would come back to cut down the tree and then it would be too late. The stakes were high and it would be foolish to wait.

It reminds me of what's going on with our minivan. When we bought it last summer it had about 100,000 miles on it, and as we were in the process of buying

it, the salesman said it was due to have the timing belt replaced. Apparently the belt would get old and worn and needed to be replaced at regular intervals because if you didn't, and it broke, it would immediately ruin the engine. We're talking thousands of dollars, so it needed to be taken care of!

But then I heard the price – anywhere from \$900 - \$1500!!! Cheaper than a new engine, but still a lot of money for something that was still working fine! We drove our old van, which was the same make and model, and made it to 240,000 miles without any problems, so couldn't I just wait? Bad idea. It's only a matter of time before it breaks. The clock is ticking and the consequences are very serious. So I'm taking it in this month.

Time is limited in our lives as well, and the consequences couldn't be higher. In Acts 17:30 it says, *"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup> because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."*

That's what's coming. The clock is ticking. None of us knows what day will be our last. So when we go through times of complacency in our lives we need to fight against the temptation to stay there and keep drifting and do whatever we need to do to draw near to Christ. If you're in one of those times right now, ask God for mercy –to awaken your soul and give you desire for him. Take practical steps to reawaken your spirit – set aside time for prayer and Bible study, join a small group, meet weekly with trusted Christian friend or mentor who can encourage you and hold you accountable.

As you draw near to God, he will draw near to you, and when you think of standing before him someday, you can be filled with joyful hope, rather than uncertain fear.