



The Tri-Cities Edifier

Volume 9

February 13, 2022

No. 7

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

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“He also spoke this parable: ‘A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’ 8 But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. 9 And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down’ (Lk. 13:6–9).”

Jesus had just commanded repentance instead of rationalizing degrees of sin to escape personal accountability (Lk. 13:1-5). The parable of the barren fig tree adds divine longsuffering and compassion to the necessity of repentance. (1) God expects us to bear fruit (v. 6). Disciples of Christ will bear fruit (Jn. 15:1-8). (2) God is longsuffering, wanting sinners to repent (v. 7). The owner did not immediately cut down the fruitless tree. He searched three years for fruit. God seeks sinners’ repentance, not their demise (2 Pet. 3:9). So must we. (3) The compassionate mercy of God teaches us not to give up on sinners (vv. 8-9). The vinedresser asked for another year to tend the tree to stimulate fruit. Like Jesus, let us not quickly dismiss and forget those overtaken by sin (Gal. 6:1-2; Jas. 5:19-20). They need our help, even as Christ helps us when we sin (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 4:14-16). (4) God will punish unrepented sin (v. 9). The owner would cut down the fruitless tree if it did not become productive (Jn. 15:6).

We will not escape accountability and punishment for our sins if we refuse to repent (Lk. 13:3, 5). Redeem your time. Repent and be faithful to the Lord. God is compassionate, patient, and merciful; A jealous God who punishes sin yet shows mercy to those who love Him and keep His commandments (cf. Ex. 20:5-6)

A Spiritual Wellness Check

Jason Hardin

Examine yourselves... (2 Cor 13:5)

What’s my temperature?

Jesus warned in Matthew 24:12 about the love of many growing “cold.” If the Lord were to give me an accurate reading of the temperature of my love for him and others, what would my reading be? What do my assembling habits indicate? What do my patterns of hospitality suggest? What do my habits of Bible study show? What do my efforts as a servant reveal? What does my prayer life declare? What’s my temperature?

How’s my vision?

Peter warned about being so spiritually nearsighted that we’re blind (2 Pet 1:5-9). How does it happen? If we fail to supplement our faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with steadfastness, steadfastness with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. “For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.” How’s my vision? Am I getting the spiritual supplements that I need?

How’s my hearing?

Jesus warned in Matthew 13 about those who have ears, and yet they can “barely hear” (13:15). To make it personal, he told a parable about some who hear God’s word and immediately receive it with joy, yet they develop no spiritual roots. When tribulation or persecution arises, they immediately fall away. Others hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. “He who has ears, let him hear” (13:9). How’s my hearing?

How’s my speech?

Are lies, complaining, filthy language and careless words spewing from my unguarded mouth? Have I slipped into a God-dishonoring habit of taking his holy name in vain? Am I using my tongue for deceitful flattery, gossip, and slander? If so, what I *really* need to ask is...

How’s my heart?

“For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:43-45)

Examine yourselves. When we do, what do we find? Undoubtedly you have progress to make. So do I. The good news? Jesus said in Luke 5:31-32: “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” Healing *is* available. The Great Physician *is* calling. The question? Will I give him complete and total access to my heart in order that he might do his work of transformation in me?

Living in a State of Readiness

by Heath Rogers

The disciples asked Jesus when He would return. He was very clear in His answer. No one knows.

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only... Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matt. 24:36, 42-44).

Instead of giving us clues to the time of His return, Jesus taught us to live in a state of readiness. We are to watch and be ready. We are to live as if the Lord could return at any moment.

Jesus went on to give a parable to illustrate what it means to live in a state of readiness (Matt. 24:45-51). The master departed without clear instructions regarding his time for return. It was up to the servants to decide how they would behave while the master was away. The faithful and wise servant stayed busy serving his master. The evil servant began to think that his master wasn’t returning any time soon. He stopped serving his master and began serving himself. He mistreated his fellow servants. He ate and drank with the drunkards. He knew his master was returning, but the thought had been pushed to the back of his mind. He believed he had plenty of time to repent and do what was right. However, “the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of” (v. 50).

Living in a state of readiness does not mean we know when the Lord is coming. It means we know He is returning. It means we live to please the Lord, not ourselves, longing to hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant!”