

The Barren Fig Tree – Luke 13:6-9 – Inductive Bible Study





Luke 13:6-9

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.’”

1. What title do you give to this parable?

Where’s the fruit?

Running out of time

The best conditions

Cut it down!

Consequences of fruitlessness

2. What other parables have similar characteristics or theme?

The two builders

The sower

The wheat and the weeds

The unforgiving servant

The two sons

The wicked vinedressers

The wedding feast

The fig tree

The ten virgins

The talents

The absent householder

The good Samaritan

The faithful servant and the evil servant

The great supper

The rich man and Lazarus

The Pharisee and the tax collector

The minas

3. Who was Jesus speaking to when He gave this parable?

Jesus was speaking to the crowds.

Luke 12:54 And **He was also saying to the crowds,** " When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming,' and so it turns out.

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.

4. What was the context for this parable?

The immediate context was His call to repent or to perish. The broader context is His assertion that the Jewish nation was spiritually dull and did not recognize that God, in fact, was in their very midst. If they did not respond appropriately with a true repentance characterized by bearing fruit, then they indeed would perish.

5. What are the main elements of the parable and what does each represent?

- a. Man – God
- b. Fig tree – nation of Israel
- c. Planted – God chose and cared for Israel
- d. Vineyard – favored position and status of God's chosen people
- e. Three years – First 3 years of Jesus' ministry
- f. Come looking for fruit – God reasonable expectation that the fig tree would produce figs
- g. Cut it down – Israel was to be broken off because of its disobedience
- h. Use up the ground – Israel's special privileges were wasted on it
 - i. Let it alone – Christ intercedes for the nation of Israel
 - j. This year too – Remaining time of Jesus' ministry
 - k. Dig around it – Israel's special blessings, revelations, and relationship
 - l. Put in fertilizer – Even more grace given to Israel
 - m. If it bears fruit next year – An extension of God's mercy and forbearance

- n. Fine – The production of fruit during the extended time would have been acceptable to the God.
- o. If not – If they continue being unfruitful
- p. Cut it down – Israel would squander its last chance and be broken off

6. What spiritual principle(s) does this parable teach?

- a. God's chosen people are blessed with many advantages.
- b. God rightly expects fruit from those whom He richly blesses.
- c. A fig tree that produces no fruit is worthless.
- d. God is very patient with His people for a long time.
- e. There will come a time when God will no longer exercise His patience, but will instead deal according to His wrath with unfaithful, unfruitful subjects.
- f. True repentance is produces fruit.
- g. If one continues in unfruitfulness, he is not a true believer.
- h. Not only did Israel not produce fruit, but it squandered valuable resources that could have been put to use by others.
- i. God is always the initiative taker.

7. Cross references to this parable?

*Matt 3:10 "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore **every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.***

*John 15:1-8 " I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit , He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. 3 " You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 " Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; **he who***

abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6 **“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.** 7 “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 “My Father is glorified by this, that you **bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.**

Matt 21:19 Seeing **a lone fig tree by the road**, He came to it and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He said to it, “No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you.” And at once the fig tree withered.

Isa 5:1-2 Let me sing now for my well-beloved

A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard.

My well-beloved had **a vineyard on a fertile hill.**

2 He dug it all around, removed its stones,

And planted it with the choicest vine.

And He built a tower in the middle of it

And also hewed out a wine vat in it;

Then He expected it to produce good grapes,

But it produced only worthless ones.

Rom 11:1-5 I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

2 **God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew.** Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God

against Israel? 3 “Lord, **THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE.**” 4 But what is the divine response to him? ” I HAVE KEPT for Myself **SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL.**” 5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice.

Rom 11:11 I say then, **they did not stumble so as to fall, did they?** May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

Rom 11:22-23 Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. 23 And they also, **if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.**

Isa 27:6 **In the days to come Jacob** will take root,

Israel will blossom and sprout,

And **they will fill the whole world with fruit.**

John 15:8 “My Father is glorified by this, that you **bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.**

1 Cor 3:6-7 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. 7 So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but **God who causes the growth.**

Col 1:6 which has come to you, just as in all the world also **it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing,** even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;

Gen 26:12 Now Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. And the LORD blessed him,

Ps 126:5-6 Those who **sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting**. 6 He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, Shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

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8. Questions or problems with the interpretation of this parable.

- a. What was done the final year that was not done in the previous three years?
- b. Why cut it down? Even if it wasn't fruitful, what harm was it doing?
- c. How does this principle apply to a Christian?
- d. Why do Christians sometimes lack fruit in their life?
- e. What kind of fruit was the man looking for? Be specific.

f. Why does God exercise patience for so long?

g. What fruit would you most like to see developed in your life?

9. Based on this parable, what changes in my life does Jesus want me to make?