

Are You Ready For When There Are No Days Left?

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[0 : 00] Luke chapter 13. Luke chapter 13.

We'll be looking at the first nine verses this morning. People die all the time.

I know that's a stark statement to start my message with. But people die all the time. We don't think about that unless it comes close to us.

Often their death is connected with a reason that makes it more palatable. They were old. They were sick.

Sometimes, though, things happen and people die in ways that make it hard for death to be palatable. On September 11, 2001, four planes were hijacked.

[1 : 26] Two were flown into the World Trade Centers. One into the Pentagon. One was downed by passengers in an effort to protect it from being used against another target.

Two thousand nine hundred and seventy seven people lost their life because of those attacks. We all remember.

It's sad. Now there are people who don't remember because they weren't there. But the rest of us remember where we were when we heard that. On December 26, 2004, a 9.2 magnitude earthquake struck in the Indian Ocean.

That earthquake caused a 100-foot-high tsunami wave to wash ashore in India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Somalia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

And, 227,898 people were killed in that incident. Now, I've not lost my place.

[2 : 40] Hang on as I say this. On September 24, 2001, 2,977 people got up, not knowing that that day would be the last day they would have to do anything about the fate of their soul.

And on September 26, 2004, 227,898 people got up, not knowing that that day would be the last day they would have to do anything about the fate of their soul.

And so my simple, though stark, question to you today is, are you ready for when there are no days left to do anything about the fate of your soul?

Let's read from Luke chapter 13, 1 through 9. There were some, I should, we'll get into some background in a minute, but remember, this is Jesus' sermon.

He's been speaking to the crowds. The disciples have been there. He's been taking time to talk to the disciples, but this is directly to the crowds. He started it back a couple verses. He says in verse 1, And there were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

[4 : 18] And he answered them, Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered in this way? No.

I tell you, But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Are those 18 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?

No. I tell you, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. And he told this parable.

A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. He came seeking fruit on it and found none. 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? And he answered him, Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure.

[5 : 24] Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good. But if not, you can cut it down. Let's pray together. Father, I thank you for this passage.

I thank you for how it reveals your heart. And I thank you that we can see this, we can hear from you, even as you address the crowds that are around.

And I pray that you would open our eyes to the truth, those who are here who don't know you, that they would see the truth that it's here. Those of us who do know you would also see the truth that's here.

And I pray that you bring about the result that your word intends, as we prayed earlier. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, as I mentioned, this is part of that sermon that Jesus has been, been preaching pretty much to the crowd.

It started at the beginning of chapter 12. He's preached to the crowd and had opportunities to take moments to talk to his disciples. And so he goes back and forth between the disciples and the crowd.

[6 : 34] And what we've read today is the closing of that sermon. When he finishes the parable, he's done with this sermon. He goes on to another situation. Now, we know there's a lot more teaching that he'll do before he arrives in Jerusalem.

But he has set his face in Jerusalem. He spent time teaching people on the way, particularly his disciples. But this sermon has been equally rich towards those who are just following him.

And we can see from the beginning of chapter 12 that it was a great company. Thousands upon thousands were at this point following Jesus. And as he wraps this sermon up, chapter 12 has been the situation where he's been speaking to these people.

As he addresses the crowd in this chapter, he has centered on one theme. Now, he's talked to his disciples about things that relate to it.

But he's centered on one theme through this whole sermon. And that is of people being right with God. As people were following him, as he's coming down from Galilee, down into Jerusalem to die, he has been speaking to these people and letting them know that they need to be ready.

[7 : 47] They need to be right with God before it's too late. So by way of review, just a couple of things, verses 13 to 21, he basically teaches them there's no amount of saving or protecting yourself when it is time for your soul to be required before God.

You can't stave it off. You can't have riches that will keep God from calling you to account before him. Your soul will be required.

And he's speaking of, when he's talking about required, will be required to give an account to God for what you did with Jesus. And then in verses 54 to 56, Jesus rebukes the crowd.

He goes on to talk about, you can discern the face of the sky and the earth. You can look at it and say, oh, look, clouds in the west.

It's going to rain. Wind from the south. It's going to be warm. He's saying, you know how to discern the face of the sky and the earth. He says, and he commands them at that point, you need to interpret the signs concerning the Christ that's right in front of you.

[8 : 59] You need to discern this time. Jesus is here. He's been speaking. He's been telling them the kingdom of God is at hand. He's been telling them he's going to Jerusalem to die. He's been sharing the gospel with them over and over.

And he's saying, you can tell what the weather's going to be by looking at the western sky or feeling the south wind or the north wind. You need to determine by the things you have plainly seen that Jesus has done, that Jesus has said.

He's the son of God. He's come for a purpose. He's coming to call you to repentance. And you need to deal with that before it's too late. And I want to remind you that in this passage, he's addressing generally the crowds.

In the midst of this sermon, though, in the midst of this, I think this was a long thing. I think there was much more here than just what was here. I think it was a long thing. And I think it took an hour or so, maybe more.

But at one point in the sermon, we've already had one situation where someone spoke up to Jesus in the middle of his sermon and says, Master, make my brother divide the inheritance with me.

[10 : 14] Not the kind of sermons that we usually have. Where someone stands up and turns the direction. By the way, I don't want those kinds of sermons.

I don't have the brain to do that. But here we have another situation where in the midst of it, in the midst of his sermon, someone stands up to tell Jesus some news.

They had been on their phone. You know, it didn't happen now. But they had been on the phone this morning just to receive news. There's been an atrocity in Jerusalem.

Now, how much before this, we don't know. How much before this point, this event happened, we don't know. But they relate this atrocity. Remember what an atrocity is?

Something that shouldn't have taken place. Some evil person did some evil thing. It's a wrong. It's a wrong the way this thing was done. Galileans were killed and it wasn't right that they were killed.

[11:16] It was an atrocity. And the atrocity was that Pilate had killed some Galileans and mingled their blood with the sacrifices. You can see that in the first three verses there.

Now, this is a real event. But we can't find anything outside of Scripture that talks about it. It doesn't matter. You can find events that were much worse than this recorded outside of Scripture.

It doesn't, just because Josephus didn't record it doesn't mean it wasn't real. It was a true event. It just goes to the other evidences of the kind of man that Pilate was.

His mode of operation. Josephus does record many instances where Pilate was ruthless in the way he treated the Jews.

He was king over the area, particularly in Jerusalem, but he was ruthless. He would kill, he killed two to three thousand people at one point for a hint, just a hint of treason.

[12:21] So this was certainly within Pilate's mode of operation. This thing, this bit of news probably happened during the Passover.

It's the only time that the people, the pilgrims coming to Jerusalem would be in the temple to kill their own sacrifice. And so this probably happened in the temple where people were lining up or just outside the temple where people lining up to kill their sacrifice for the Passover.

And Pilate had, however many, doesn't say how many, Pilate had, however many of these Galileans, people from Jesus' own area, killed for whatever reason.

And in killing them, as they lay dying, falling upon the lambs they have just killed, their blood was then mingled with the blood of their sacrifice. I think, I think this particular person stood up to relate this account for several reasons or one of the reasons here.

I think possibly because Jesus was from Galilee. Hey, did you hear about the people from your country? Secondly, I think it was to incite Jesus to say something against Pilate and get him in trouble with Rome.

[13:43] Jesus didn't fall for that bait. It would have been fine in one sense for Jesus to speak out. In fact, we have an account a little later in the Gospels where some of the Pharisees were warning Jesus about Pilate and Jesus says, you go tell that fox that I'm going to do miracles this day and another day and then I'm going on my way.

I'm not afraid to tell him what needs to be told. But here he is hearing this news and possibly they were trying to incite him to respond inappropriately.

Praise God. Jesus knew what was appropriate, when it was appropriate, and he lived a perfect life for us. I think the third reason is kind of the same thing that happens to a lot of us.

I think this was mentioned to try to get a handle on how to think about the atrocities like this that happened. I mentioned to you 9-11.

I mentioned to you the tsunami earthquake. Earthquake and tsunami. And one of the big things that happens is that people just don't know how to handle these kinds of atrocities.

[15:01] What do you do? I was thankful in 2004 for the guidance we got as a church on how to think about that.

And so people's minds normally go there. So this man has blurted out this news and Jesus responds.

He responds to this atrocity with two truths. I think there's a secondary truth that he deals with and a primary truth. Both are equally true and both are equally important but he's pointing at one thing.

So he responds to the atrocity with two truths. Look at verse 2. And he said to them do you think that these Galatians were worse sinners than all the other Galatians because they suffered in this way?

It's common in this world for people to think that people suffer because they have done something wrong. Not in every situation but it is a common thing we do it.

[16:10] We hear about a tragedy and we wonder well was it this situation behind it? Is that why he did it? Is that what happened? Job 7.4 which is the whole book addresses a lot of exactly what Jesus is answering in this situation.

But remember as Job lay there suffering in chapter 4 and verse 7 one of his friends says to him remember who that was innocent ever perished or where were the upright cut off basically saying

you know people just suffer because they did something and we as we look through the book of Job at the first part and even at the end it was proven that Job was not suffering because he had done something wrong he was suffering for the glory of God but people's minds go in that direction our minds can go in that direction who sinned?

John 9 verses 1 and 2 man born blind as they passed by as he passed by he saw a man blind from birth and his disciples asked him Rabbi who sinned?

this man or his parents that he was born blind that's our natural inclination and Jesus as this man puts forth this news item and the wonderment that would be going on in his mind why did this happen?

Are Galileans bad people so God's punishing them? You remember the situation in New Orleans when Katrina came ashore people blamed the destruction of New Orleans for the sin that went on in New Orleans?

[17 : 56] it's not true we're all sinners we all deserve punishment but God didn't send those things necessarily because they sinned so the first truth Jesus shares with these people is that the presence of suffering does not mean that they're suffering because they've sinned and when they ask Jesus specifically about these Galileans Jesus' answer when he says did they suffer because they were more sinful than other Galileans and Jesus' answer is a resounding and emphatic no no it wasn't because of that we know as I mentioned from the book of Job that suffering is not always because of someone's sin can be for many reasons we should not assume the worst for others suffering is not necessarily linked to people's wickedness all people will die last I heard reports are that 100% of people in this world die no one beats it all people die all are sinners we die because we are sinners but the manner of our death doesn't mean we were good or bad

Jesus is turning his first point is no do not assume people die or suffer in atrocities because they were sinners he's rounding this corner and he's getting us to see that all will stand before God in judgment and so he says in verse 3 no I tell you but unless you repent you will all likewise perish this atrocity is a reminder that all will die and all will stand before the judgment to give an account that's what Jesus points to this should not be a point where you question their sinfulness this should be a point to remind you that all will die and stand before God in judgment now that wouldn't have been the first thing we thought of if we had just heard the news that

Jesus heard it's not the first thing we would have thought of necessarily unless we trained by the word of God we would have not necessarily first thought when 9-11 happened well that's just pointing to the fact that everyone needs to be ready for the judgment we would not have immediately thought on 2004 and that tsunami yet we would not immediately thought oh everyone dies this just reminds us that we need to be ready for the judgment but Jesus is saying here you folks need to see that you folks need to see that when calamity happens when an atrocity happens you are to be people who are ready for the day you die we don't know when our time on earth is done and if you think about it you think about these

Galileans they were doing what was right they woke up thinking about the events of the day in service to God they had no thought that where they would spend eternity would depend on where they stood with God at that very moment this is the turn that Jesus is making this is the thing he's aiming at you don't know when you will die and these Galileans eager to worship God eager to make their Passover sacrifices and to remember the Passover had no clue that today that day not today today but that day would be their final day it made no difference that they were cut down by a wicked act of an evil man life was done and their eternity was decided by where they stood with God at that moment I want you to notice that Jesus used the word perish! He didn't use the word die! He's not just speaking about dying here!

[22 : 51] He is most specifically addressing the eternal state of the soul the people he was addressing were not ready to meet God the crowd was not ready to meet God they had not repented and they were facing eternity under the judgment of God and it wasn't just a they're dying it was a there's an eternal!

punishment coming it is an eternal situation now Jesus in his answer here both in verse 3 and verse 5 are alluding to Psalm chapter 7 verse 12 and that verse says if a man does not repent God will wet his sword he has bent and readied his bow in that passage in Psalms the psalmist is speaking of God's judgment on the wicked and verse 12 speaks particularly of God returning a judgment on those who do not repent and so as Jesus is answering people as he's directing their thoughts as they've asked this question he's reminding them they didn't know the day they were going to die

they didn't know that that day was the day they were going to die and he says if you don't repent! face perishing not just dying but perishing suffering under the judgment of God he has wet his sword he's sharpened his sword he's ready to bring vengeance on those who will not turn to him and he's drawn his bow he's ready God is ready why?

because we're sinners and he is a holy God and he is ready to send judgment when Jesus makes a second example this man had brought an atrocity oh yeah well maybe we can forgive those people because somebody did something against them that you know wasn't right but in Luke 13 4 and 5 he says or not just the Galileans or what about the 18 on whom this tower of Siloam fell and killed them do you think they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem this example is not about an atrocity this example is about a tragedy something that happens that was no one's fault it just happened and what happened happened and brought about the results that happened nobody around them was trying to kill those 18 people again we don't know particulars about this incident but somewhere around the tower of

Siloam which is in the southern end many people think this was Pilate's effort at this point to redirect some water to protect the city against attackers and in the process whether it was scaffolding around the tower of the tower itself somehow something happened and this tower or the scaffolding falls over and kills these 18 people it was an accident nobody was going about saying I'm going to kill some people today I've had enough of it was just an accident!

[26 : 28] but the emphasis I think Jesus says the second example both to show us that it doesn't matter whether you die at the hand of an evil man or you die because of an accident your end is the same God didn't excuse the people that died at the tower of Siloam because it was just an accident they were still sinners they still stood before a holy God they still deserve the wrath of God for their sin so the emphasis of both of these accounts as far as Jesus is concerned is whether we suffer at the hand of someone else or die in an accident or die of old age it's because we will die and we may not know when and we probably won't know when and in both of these people's cases both the men who were killed by

Pilate and the people who were killed by the tower of Siloam nobody woke up that day saying I only have six hours left I need to be ready both groups woke up not knowing that it was the last day they had to be ready for the judgment so my question to you don't get your hopes up it's not the end of the message yet my question to you is would you perish if today was the last day you could do anything about the fate of your soul some of you young people have grown up in the church you've heard the gospel over and over and over and maybe you thought I'm going to wait

Jesus is saying you don't know you don't know when it's going to happen you need to be ready now you need to repent so young person if today was the last day you got to do anything about this state of your soul are you ready now all of us think about young people what about some of you older folks what about some of you who are getting gray and long in the tooth maybe you've said yeah maybe a little later would you perish if today was the last day you could do anything about the fate of your soul this is a great exhortation by Christ and we should not take one little thing from it but I am I'm just moved by the way Jesus ends this he tells us a parable he told them a parable we can relate it to us in this instance a man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard and he came seeking fruit on it and found none and he said to the vine dresser look for three years now I've come seeking fruit on this fig tree and I find none cut it down why should it use the ground and he answered him sir let it alone this year also until they dig around it and put manure put on manure then if it should bear fruit next year well and good but if not you can cut it down fig trees did not bear fruit for a couple years after they were planted we don't know how old this tree was he had already been searching for this was the third year he'd been searching for fruit some say that it had already been planted six years some say that it was an old tree and he'd been looking for fruit it doesn't matter doesn't matter that's not the point of what's going on here when the owner could not find fruit after three years he was ready to pronounce judgment it was time the trees wasting soil it's blocking! sunlight from other it's time for judgment it's time for the tree to perish but notice that the vine dresser steps up now he's not the owner now and one of the things you need to be mindful of with parables is you don't push the different points too much okay yes the vine dresser is a picture of Jesus but again you can't push it too much just take the overall emphasis that Jesus is doing here this tree was done as far as the owner was concerned it was time to perish but the desire of the vine dresser would be that judgment would be delayed one more year while it was shown extra grace and undeserved grace let me cultivate it let me fertilize it and if it doesn't produce fruit all right

perishing is right judgment is proper what do we see here if you're here today and you've heard the gospel before and you didn't die you're just like this fig tree right now the vine dresser has said give them more time now again don't push this too far

[33 : 06] Jesus is God he knows the end from the beginning yes I'm not trying to push all that but from your standpoint from where you sit from the way things are working in your life the vine dresser who has allowed you to hear the gospel before if you're still alive it's because he's wanted more time for you and he is willing to invest work in you that's grace that's amazing grace I first heard the gospel when I was 10 I wrestled and rebelled until I was 12 two years many have wrestled and rebelled many more years than that don't let that grace let you feel comfortable 2nd Peter 3 I'm going to read verses 3 to 10 knowing this first of all that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing following their own sinful desires they will say where is the promise of his coming for ever since the father fell asleep all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation!

for they deliberately overlooked this fact that the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God and that by means of these the word that then existed the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished what do we have we have a long time from where God created all there was and gave man his message and however long the world existed from the creation of the world to Noah's flood God was gracious but there was a day when it stopped Noah had gone into the ark with his family the Lord closed the door the Lord brought rain and all died except those who trusted by the same word the heavens now existed stored up from fire being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly but do not overlook this one fact beloved that with the

Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise which promise both forgiveness for those who repent this is talking about God coming again but forgiveness for those who repent judgment for those who don't the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promises some men count slowness but is patient towards you not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance but the day of the Lord will come as a thief and then the heavens will pass away with a roar and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved and the earth and the works that are done in it will be exposed now we know that there's coming a day where there will be this judgment that takes place but the thing you need to be mindful of is not all of us will last till that judgment whether it's ten years from now a hundred years from now five thousand years from now but all of us will die all of us will have a day when grace will come to an end you do not know when your life will end take take lesson from the

Galileans and those on whom the tower of Siloam fell they did not wake up expecting to die they were not expecting the time of God's grace to end and so Christ's words to you if you do not repent you will likewise perish but if you repent you have your sins paid for you have the righteousness of Christ you have a right standing before God you have the privilege of approaching the great throne of God as a child would come to his father you have peace with God you have hope of eternal life you have the fact that your body will be raised and made new like his glorious body you have the fact that you will be in heaven for all eternity with him ruling and reigning with him beholding his glory the most exciting the most blessed thing a person joy your greatest enjoyment cannot compare to the joy of seeing

[38 : 41] Christ as savior and so it is with this kind of heart that Jesus says unless you repent you will likewise perish Christian I know this is this message has been a lot because Jesus said it to the crowds he was speaking to people who weren't trusting him but there's the heart of Christ here we've just spoke of it in one sense but Christian I want you to see the heart of Jesus here for the crowds around him willing to warn in bold words of their need repent or you will likewise perish was that hatred was that wrath was that vindicateness no that was love Jesus is here the same one who would stand and weep over Jerusalem oh Jerusalem Jerusalem you would kill the prophets!

gather you to myself as a hen gathers her chicks but you would not it says he wept over Jerusalem this is not a God who stands over you ready to throw bolts of lightning because he hates you this is a God who stands over you and says repent lest you perish this is a God who stands over you as this loving vine dresser says let me let me work let me do now his hands not shortened don't think again that we can press this and say the vine dresser failed God does not fail at those he works in but from your standpoint today is the day of salvation Christian do you hear or do you have the heart of Christ for the crowds around you I confess!

My heart is not this kind of heart I wish it was this kind of heart I see the coldness of my own heart when it comes to the crowds around but do we have the heart of Christ as he looks at this crowd you could die at any moment with no time to deal with your soul repent do you have the heart of Christ Romans 10 14 and 15 how then will they call on him in whom they have not believed and how are they to believe in him of whom they have not heard and how are they to hear without someone preaching and how are they to preach unless they are sent as those who preach the good news will you plead with them will you plead for them will you work for them remember all the time that these words are being said his disciples are watching he's teaching his disciples here Christian let him teach you his heart may he teach us his heart let's pray together thank you father for your word thank you father for the beautiful picture of Christ here I pray that any who are here who do not know you would recognize the precariousness of their situation and at the same time would recognize the amazing love and grace of Christ who is willing to stand before them and say repent lest you perish who is willing to put them in situations where they can hear the gospel put them in situations where there are people around who know the gospel who live the gospel and I pray that whether it be young people here or old here whoever is hearing the word of God today would be drawn to you and would repent before they perish and father we are cold hard hearted people give us your heart for those that are around may we have the same love and desire this earnestness to plead to work to warn those around us who don't know that Lord I'm convinced in my own heart and all of our hearts this is not something we can do to ourselves we need to obey but we need your spirit to work in us in relation to this we pray in Jesus name Amen