

Group Study Outline

Luke 12:54-13:9

Theme Sentence

Since judgement is coming, we must take the appropriate action now: repent!

Launching Question

Martin Luther wrote: *When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said 'Repent', he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance.* What do you think he meant?

READ Luke 13:6-9

Questions

Tell the story to one another.

What is the owner of the vineyard waiting for?

And if that doesn't happen, what will he do?

What are all the things we learn about the owner?

Thinking it through

What does this story tell us about God and about us?

READ Luke 13:1-5

Questions

Tell the stories to one another.

What kind of theology lies behind the opinions of verses 2 and 4?

What is promised in verses 3 and 5? for whom? and why?

Thinking it through

What does Jesus imply is the link between suffering and sin?

How does this paragraph link to 13:6-9? what is the 'fruit' that God looks for?

What happens to the person who doesn't produce this fruit of repentance?

READ Luke 12:54-59

Questions

According to the analogy in 57-59, if I'm facing a court case where I'm likely to be found guilty, what should I do?

How is that similar to what we've read in 13:1-9?

How is the idea of an out-of-court settlement a good analogy of the cross?

Thinking it through

In what ways is human suffering (13:1-5) like a cloud (in 54) or wind (in 55)?

In what ways is 'division' (51-53) like a cloud (in 54) or wind (in 55)?

So ... 'interpret the present time' to me!

To whom is Jesus speaking – both then (54 cf 12:1, 22), and now?

What is his message for those people/for us?

What is 'repentance'?

Why is repentance the appropriate response to forthcoming judgement?

Is it repentance that saves people from God's judgement? ... or is it Jesus?

What would a life marked by repentance look like?

Is my entire life one of repentance (as Martin Luther described)?

Luke 12:54-13:9



Where are we in *Luke*?



In 3:21-9:50, Luke's focus is on how Jesus reveals himself though **what he did**: we learn what he came to do and the response he sought. At 9:51, there's a change as Jesus set his face towards Jerusalem, his death and the rescue he

came to achieve: Luke's focus is more on **what he taught**.

But the main theme is the same in both sections ... how a person inherits eternal life (which is, of course, what Jesus came to rescue God's people for). In particular, Jesus has been teaching that:

- eternal life comes through Jesus alone, and rejection of him leads to condemnation (10:13-42).
- we must ask God for that eternal life (11:2-13). We respond to him by hearing and obeying what he says (11:28) and trusting/acknowledging him (12:5-10), even though this will cost us everything (9:57-62).
- obtaining eternal life in this way is in stark contrast to the Jews' focus on religion (11:37-52).

Our current section began at 12:13 where Jesus explains that **the life he has come to give God's people is primarily life in the next world**. Life in this world is transient, so we should not be concerned about it. And actually, in this world, we will experience hardship and painful divisions. That's why, instead, our focus and effort should be directed towards the next world, for that is where our treasure is. The whole world is divided by this question: am I patiently for Jesus' coming by repenting-to-obtain-eternal-life, and faithfully doing what he wants?

12:13-34 the theme introduced

12:35-13:9 three implications of the theme (12:35-48; 12:49-53; 12:54-13:9).

[NS]

Theme Sentence

Since judgement is coming, we must take the appropriate action now: repent!

Application

- Interpret the signs around us: when Jesus comes, he will come as judge, and when that judgement comes, we can expect terrible punishment.
- And since that is the case, we'd be very stupid if we didn't prepare now, whilst a patient God delays, so that we can escape that coming judgement.
- The right response to the coming judgement (and the punishment that I surely deserve and is certainly coming then) is to produce what John called 'the fruit of repentance' (3:8).

Commentary

Implication 1

Luke 12:35-48

be ready for the coming of the Master (35-40)

- what if I am ready when he comes? (37-38)
- what if I am not ready when he comes? (39)

(and in the meantime) do what the Master has set us to do (42-48)

- what if I do do what he set us to do? (42-44)
- what if I don't do what he set us to do? (45-48)

Implication 2

Luke 12:49-53

there are two significant dates on God's timeline of history:

- the soon-coming judgement of Jesus (49)
- the distressing cross of Jesus (50)

In between verse 50 and verse 49, Jesus's coming has brought division between people on earth (51-53)

Listen again to sermon: <http://www.emmanuelonline.org.uk/the-great-divide>

Implication 3

Luke 12:54-13:9

54-56 The point here is similar to our 'red sky at night, shepherd's delight ...'! In other words, clouds building in the west indicate moisture rising from the Mediterranean, and a south-westerly wind announce hot dry weather from the desert. You know what these meteorological signs indicate.

In the same way, something about *the present time* should indicate certain things to them/us. But what is this 'something' that should act like an indicator? Jesus is probably referring either to what he has said in the preceding verses, or to what he's about to say in the next verses:

- *either* the division that we experience *from now* on (12:51-53) anticipates the final division that Jesus will bring on judgment day;
- *or* tragedies (like those described in 13:1, 4) and fruitlessness (like that in 13:7) should warn us that judgement is not far away.

Either way, there's a black cloud in the sky. The fire of 49 is coming.

The problem is that these hearers are not making the right connections. By *hypocrites*, Jesus is not so much accusing them of 'playing a role', as saying that they've joined in with the sin of the Pharisees (cf 12:1; 13:15), failing to acknowledge the Saviour and Judge now standing in front of them.

57-59 The main point of these verses is that Jesus is telling his hearers: 'act now before you face the judge'. If you are to appear as defendant in a court case, it is better to reach an out-of-court settlement than risk being found guilty and imprisoned later. Since we are about to appear in God's courtroom, we should do whatever is needed rather than risk being

required to pay every last bit of debt towards God. Amazingly, God has been willing to reach an out-of-court settlement with guilty people like us!

What should we do now to avoid the coming judgement? Read on ...

13:1-5 We don't know any more historical detail about these two tragedies. One was the result of human unkindness (1) and the other seemingly beyond human control (4), which covers the two main causes of suffering. What we do know is that tragedy was causing some people wrongly to join the dots as Job's 'comforters' did: disaster happens to those who deserve it. There may even be some complacency behind 2 & 4 ... 'if I haven't been struck down as they were, I'll be safe from judgement'.

But Jesus won't allow for all that. He agrees that there is indeed a direct link between sin and suffering ... but it is more universal than personal. The suffering of a universal judgement is coming to all people because all people sin. So when I see suffering now, the right way to join the dots or *interpret the present time* (cf 12:54-56) is to think: 'I deserve that to come to me too; the only way I can avoid perishing eternally is to repent'. So, repent!

This is an old-faithful passage for Christians turn up for apologetics answers to questions about suffering. But note that Jesus' target is more urgent: his concern is that we should be ready to stand before the judge on the last day. The only way to live with the perspective of *his kingdom* (12:31) is that we act now before it is too late. So, repent!

As a side-line, it's worth noticing that the idea of a Galilean suffering in Jerusalem at the hands of Pilate anticipates Jesus himself. So it's clearly not the case that the one who suffers is always the worst sinner!

6-9 This is the clearest of the four paragraphs. For three years, a vineyard owner has been looking for fruit and found none. He delays cutting down his fig-tree for one more year to give a final chance for fruit to grow.

Primarily, this is about Israel (cf Isaiah 5:1-7). She's had three years of Jesus' ministry, but within the next year, Jesus will be killed and Israel-as-a-nation will lose her chance to respond aright to the owner's son (cf Luke 20:9-18). But it applies by extension to all. Judgement is coming, and that is when any vineyard that produces no fruit will be cut down.

13:1-5 has shown us that the fruit that is looked for is repentance: *unless you repent, you will all likewise perish*. Just as John preached in 3:8-9.

Behind this *parable* is an insight into the astounding patience of God. Again and again and again he has come looking for fruit ... but he'll still wait a bit longer. This explains why *my master is delayed* (45).

This passage has even more bite if it is kept tightly tied into the context of the main theme in 12:13-34. Since this life is short, our focus should be life in the world to come. Between now and then, Jesus will come to bring judgement. The division we experience now is a distressing foretaste of the dreadful division then. Repent now to be ready (for when the fruit-picker comes)!