

Group Study Outline

LAUNCH QUESTION

What kinds of things do people point to to show they're a good person?
Are those things the fruit Jesus is looking for?
We'll be exploring what fruit Jesus does & doesn't want in the passage today...

READ Luke 13:10-17

QUESTIONS

What was life like for the woman in v11?
What explanation is given for her condition? (11, 16)
What do you make of that as an explanation? In what sense is it very specific to her situation? In what sense is all suffering a sign of Satan's slavery?
What does Jesus do for her? How does He do it? How is it described?
What's her response? (13)
How do you think we would have reacted if we'd been there?

How does the ruler of the synagogue react?
Why does he react like that?
What do you make of his reaction? Is there anything understandable or sympathetic about it?

What does Jesus think about the ruler's reaction?
How does his hypocrisy show itself?

Have somebody read Deuteronomy 5:12-15

What reason is given for the Sabbath in the Ten Commandments?
How does that fit with what Jesus just did for this woman?
In what way is this a perfectly Sabbath-ish thing to do?
How had the synagogue ruler misunderstood the Sabbath?
How does this miracle point to what Jesus' kingdom will be like when it finally and fully comes?

Look back at Luke 13:6-9. Perhaps have somebody read it.

What fruit is Jesus looking for?
When the owner comes to the synagogue, what does He find? (Or not!)
[playing devil's advocate...]
But he's a leader in the synagogue!
But he's keeping the Sabbath! He's even made extra rules about it!
But he's Jewish! They're God's chosen people, aren't they?!
But, but, but...

Is it surprising that being religious isn't the fruit Jesus is looking for?
Where do we see fruitless religion today? (Not just 'them out there'...)
How are we tempted that way ourselves sometimes?
What should be our reaction to Jesus and His work now?
Who do we need to challenge with this story of what the fruit isn't?
Who do we need to encourage with this story of what the kingdom is?

PRAY

Luke 13:10-17



Where are we in *Luke*?

From Jesus' baptism to 9:50, Luke's focus is on how Jesus reveals himself through **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 of his teaching is similar to his self-revelation in 3:21-9:50... how a person inherits eternal life (which is, of course, what Jesus came to rescue God's people for). In particular, he has taught 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).

Having now established in 12:13-13:9 that the life Jesus has come to give God's people is primarily life in the next world, we begin a new section in 13:10-14:6. The section begins and ends with a healing on the Sabbath which the religious authorities disapprove of. There is a large focus on the Jewish nation and their part in Jesus' kingdom. The general threat that the tree which doesn't bear fruit will one day be cut down (13:6-9) is honed in on Israel. Will the religious leaders of the day and the people they lead repent and acknowledge Jesus as the coming king? Sadly this section points us to a 'no'. They continually reject the prophets and now they are rejecting Jesus too.

Beyond the immediate challenge to Jews of that time, Jesus' teaching here is a firm word to those today who might look to their religious observance or family history as if *that* were the fruit God is looking for. Such people get short shrift from Jesus and, unless they repent, will find themselves locked out of the kingdom (13:25) for having rejected His advances (13:34).

Theme Sentence

Jesus' kingdom brings freedom from Satan's slavery but the religious refuse to repent and rejoice at His coming.

Application

- Understand the wonderful truth that Jesus' kingdom brings freedom from Satan's slavery (in part now, fully later)
- Rejoice where we see Jesus freeing people from Satan
- Repent of religious attitudes that don't rejoice and keep rejecting Jesus
- Get ready for Jesus' return when the kingdom is fully brought in

[NB]

Commentary

[these notes follow the 28 September 2014 sermon at Emmanuel]

The context of 13:6-9 and beyond...

Jesus has been talking about His kingdom and that it's primarily one which will come in the future. People need to get ready for it NOW. One story Jesus tells to make this point is of a fig tree in a vineyard which doesn't grow figs. The owner keeps coming every year to check on it but there is never any of the fruit he is after and so he decides to chop the tree down. So far, so fair.

The gardener steps in and requests that they wait another year before making that final decision. He'll put on manure and Miracle Gro and water and slug pellets and do everything he can to get it to fruit. If in a year's time there are figs, fantastic. If not, then it can be chopped down. This story tells us of God's desire for godly fruit in our lives, in particular the fruit of repentance (13:5). He is currently being patient and giving us more time to repent, but one day Christ will return and those who haven't repented are for the chop. So repent!

Although this search for fruit is universal and the final swing of the axe will come to all people who have not repented, there is also a hint here of the Jewish nation being particularly addressed. Fig trees and vineyards are classic pictures of Old Testament Israel. The search for fruit among God's chosen people is a well-worn theme through the prophets too.

In our section, Jesus enters a Jewish synagogue and has a run-in with the religious authorities. In 13:22-30 Jesus warns about a time when Abraham and the big Jewish heroes will be in the kingdom but others will find themselves surprisingly locked out. Similarly, in 13:33-35 Jesus mourns over Jerusalem for its insistence on rejecting everyone God sends to them, culminating in their rejection of Him. There is a threat of their house (the temple) being forsaken. This is the end of national Israel as God's particular chosen people. And so with this search for fruit in mind, Jesus enters the synagogue...

Jesus frees the captive (13:10-13)

It's a Sabbath day and Jesus is the guest speaker at the local synagogue. In the congregation is a disabled lady, hunched over and unable to stand up straight. She had been afflicted like this for 18 years. Jesus sees that the cause of the problem is "a disabling spirit". In v16 he refers to her having been bound by Satan. This is not simply a pre-scientific understanding of medical problems, but a very specific spiritual insight into her case.

She doesn't ask for healing but Jesus has compassion on her and can't bear to leave her in that state. He freed her from this disability. It's remarkable! After simply touching her and speaking, she stands up straight for the first time in almost two decades. Her reaction is the completely appropriate one of glorifying God. Wouldn't everyone react to this with joy? Apparently not...

Jesus angers the religious (13:14)

The ruler of the synagogue is furious! He sees the healing as having broken the Sabbath. Even though he is really angry at Jesus, he attacks the previously-disabled woman and people like her, saying they should come to be healed on the other six days. He's a very unsympathetic character in every

sense; we don't sympathise with him because he doesn't sympathise with *her*. But what Jesus think? Is he ok because he's Jewish and religious?

Jesus confronts fruitless religion (13:15-16)

Jesus doesn't mince His words. "You hypocrites!" This isn't the first time Jesus has had a bust-up with the religious authorities. His first ever sermon in 4:16-30 makes an angry mob want to chuck Him off a cliff! He healed a man on the Sabbath before as well as break the leaders' Sabbath rules (6:1-11) which made them plot to have him arrested. We know from 9:22 that it will be the religious leaders who one day kill Him. Then in 11:37-12:3 Jesus warned about the hypocrisy of those people. Surprisingly to many then and now, those who are ready for Jesus' kingdom are often not the religious people.

The fact is that Jesus *hadn't* broken any commands about the Sabbath, only perhaps some of the man-made rules invented by the Pharisees. Quite the opposite! Far from being inappropriate on the Sabbath, this was exactly the kind of thing the Sabbath was for.

When the 10 Commandments were given (Deut 5:12-15), the Sabbath was to remind the people that they used to be slaves but had been set free. What better thing to do on a Sabbath than for Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, to "free" (12) a woman "whom Satan bound" (16)? The Sabbath also was a picture of God's perfect rest after creation (Exodus 20:8-11), joining Him in anticipation of a restored world of rest. Again, how appropriate on the Sabbath to re-create this woman and bring rest and relief from her pain.

The kingdom Jesus will bring is one of Sabbath rest. Satan entered the perfect rest of Genesis 2 and ruined it all, putting us all in bondage to sin, sickness and death. To a degree, all of us had been bound by Satan, albeit usually less visually obvious than the lady in this story had been. Jesus' kingdom will utterly overthrow Satan's slavery and free God's people to enjoy His perfect rest. But evidently, not everyone will be there to enjoy it. They treat their animals with greater respect and dignity than suffering people.

Jesus comes to the Jewish people at the most Jewish of places on the most Jewish of days and performs an appropriate act of powerful compassion, all of which is met with anger from the Jewish leaders. If that's not a fruitless tree ready for the axe, I don't know what is! They cannot rely on their history or their pernickety obsession with Sabbath regulations to save them. The vineyard owner has arrived and found them wanting. Will they repent?

What does Jesus do to you? (13:17)

The reaction of the people couldn't be more different to the synagogue ruler. They see what He does and hear what He says... and they rejoice. Along with the healed woman, they glorify God.

Our response is being invited here. What does Jesus do to *us*? Free us and make us rejoice? Or anger us and confront us? Can we see why He came and why He is coming again and our need to repent? Or are we resting on our moral snootiness or religious background to make us part of God's kingdom? What Jesus does to us now will determine what He will do with us then.