

“The 3rd Tower”

(Luke 13:1-9)

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(preached out of order)

I. Introduction

A. Pause to remember 9-11

1. Where were you when you heard?
2. I was gathered with students in media center
3. Watching the second plane hit the tower
4. Mesmerized
5. Watching the collapse of the towers
6. Ours is a dangerous world
 - a. Manmade disasters
 - b. Natural disasters
 1. Tsunami in Japan
 2. Earthquake in Haiti
 3. Hurricane Irene
7. Are things getting worse?
8. What does all of this mean.....and why?

B. Disasters throughout human history

1. The oddest remains in Pompeii
 - a. Around the time of the New Testament

- b. Mount Vesuvius
 - c. The statues of people frozen in time
 - d. How they got them
2. The London disaster of 1861
- a. Multiple disasters and fatalities
 - 1. The train wreck
 - 2. The tunnel collapse
 - b. Many thought God did it to punish people for traveling on Sunday
 - 1. The notion spread like wild fire
 - 2. That would really mess up our services on Sundays
 - c. Spurgeon preached a sermon on September 8, 1861
 - 1. Almost exactly 150 years ago
 - 2. To address whether it was God's punishment
 - d. Like Pat Robertson and the Twin Towers

C. Is this how God punishes sinful people?

- 1. Was God punishing America for her sins on 9-11?
 - a. Not a new question
- 2. The day a tower collapsed in Israel
 - a. I'll call it "**The Third Tower**"
 - b. The people asked Jesus about it
 - c. "Was God punishing people because they were sinners?"
- 3. Let's see what Jesus had to say
- 4. Jumping ahead a few verses to get to the tower

D. Next week will begin a special series

1. *“Surviving the Great Funk”*

a. “Hoarders, Headaches and the Hereafter”

2. We’ll address four very relevant issues:

- a. Hoarding and the quest for contentment
- b. Worry, stress and anxiety attacks
- c. When opportunity knocks
- d. The mystery of the “Hereafter”

1. What’s all this talk about a “Rapture”?

3. Then...the questions and challenges faced by your own children

a. Church kids and the unpardonable sin

1. Why so many kids leave the church after high school
2. Losing their faith on the way to college
3. Embarrassed by their faith
4. Don’t know how to defend it

b. Agnostics and the spread of doubt

1. Much greater threat than atheists
2. Your children and their battle with “doubt”
 - a. Is there really a God?
 - b. Is the Bible really from God?
 - c. Did those stories really happen?
 - d. Is there really life after death?
3. Preparing them to face college challenges

- c. Do all religions lead to God?
 - 1. Losing more than “denominations”
 - 2. Is our religion old fashioned and no longer relevant?
- d. So much to preach on...
- e. Stuff at Welcome Center

E. But first....the day the 3rd tower went down

II. Text...Luke 13

A. The Temple Massacre (vs. 1-3)

(1) Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

- 1. Who was Pilate?
 - a. The Roman governor of occupied Israel
 - b. From 26-36 A.D.
 - c. Described

“He had a deserved reputation of being very inflexible, very implacable, very wicked, very self-willed. His rule was marked by briberies and robberies and insults to the Jews, abuse, and frequent executions without trials. Savage ferocity marked the man.

- d. Pilate lit the fuse that led to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
- e. Rome finally dismissed him for unwarranted violence committed against the people he governed
- f. Will see him leading up to the crucifixion
 - 1. His words to Jesus
 - 2. His wife’s dream
- g. More later
- 2. Pilate’s prior instigations

a. *The Ensigns (banners) of Rome*

1. Violated Jewish prohibitions
2. Hung them in temple area
3. Like hanging Nazi swastikas in a synagogue
4. Jews begged Pilate to take them down
5. Nearly led to mass murder

b. *The Golden Shields*

1. Hung in the palace of Herod the Great
2. Pilate insisted on having his name (and Tiberius') on the shields
 - a. Exalting the two of them
3. Caused a near riot

c. *The Aqueduct*

1. Covered 50 miles
2. Jews loved it...until they discovered how he paid for it
3. He seized the Temple treasury
4. Money given to God by the people

3. One more insult...***“the temple massacre”***

- a. Galileans down for Passover
- b. Offering sacrifices at the altar in the temple
- c. Galileans were notoriously rebellious
- d. Pilate wanted to make them an example
- e. Had his soldiers butcher them at the altar
 1. Cut them to pieces

- f. Their blood mingled with the blood of the sacrifices
- 4. Was God behind their slaughter?
 - a. Was it because they were greater sinners than others from Galilee?
- 5. Jesus explained that God doesn't work that way

(2) Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? (3) I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.

- a. It wasn't on account of their sin
- b. Actually...all of them deserved to die
- c. This was a precursor of the judgment that was to come
- 6. Spurgeon in 1861

As I look for a moment on the poor mangled bodies of those who had been so suddenly slain, my eyes find tears but my heart does not boast. Far from me be a boastful cry, "God, I thank you that I'm not as these men are." No, no, no, it's not the Spirit of Christ nor the spirit of Christianity. While we can thank God that we are preserved, yet we can say it is of your mercy that we are not consumed.

- 7. God punctuates his patience with events that remind us that death is just around the corner and we don't know when.
- 8. We don't know when we're going to die...and we need to be ready
- 9. We're all ***"living on borrowed time"***
 - a. We call it mercy
- 10. That's why we need to live in the moment
 - a. None has a guarantee regarding tomorrow
 - b. Enjoy your children now
 - 1. Mom putting her kids in kindergarten
- 11. Live like you only have ***"One More Year"***
 - a. What changes would you make?

12. Now, the second disaster
 - a. The temple massacre was manmade
 - b. The second disaster was not

B. The Tower Disaster (v. 4)

(4) Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?

1. Jerusalem's water problem
 - a. The Ghehan Spring was outside the walled city
 - b. Brought in through Hezekiah's tunnel
 - c. Flowed into the pool of Siloam
2. Pilate built an aqueduct to distribute the water
 - a. The Romans loved to build aqueducts
3. Built towers to protect the aqueducts from terrorists
4. The main tower at Siloam collapsed and killed 18 people
 - a. And they weren't even from Galilee
 - b. Jews in Jerusalem considered themselves better than Galileans
5. We don't know why the tower collapsed
6. Did these people die because they were worse sinners?

C. The Turning from Sin (v. 5)

(5) I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

1. They hated it when Jesus told them to "repent"
2. "Religious" people still dislike the word
3. Definition of repentance:

Trust in Jesus as your only means to salvation. Because of his payment for you on the cross

Turn from your sin. Change directions. Turn from sin...to Jesus

4. Repentance is more than being sorry that you sinned

5. Or you too will “perish”

(5) ...But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

a. “*apollumi*” (*ap-ol’-loo-mee*)

1. “be destroyed”

b. Not talking about physical death

1. Spiritual death

D. The Tree (vs. 6-9)

1. The fig tree (v. 6)

(6) Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any,”

a. Very common in Israel

b. 25 feet high and 20 feet wide

c. Provided fruit and shade

d. Often planted in vineyards

1. They thrived in the tended soil

2. Worked well with the vineyards

2. The disappointing tree (v. 7)

(7) So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, “For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any.”

a. What’s wrong with my fig tree?

1. Should produce figs every year

- 2. His patience has turned to irritation
 - b. Taking up valuable space
 - 1. Providing care and nourishment
 - c. Three years and no fruit
 - d. You can feel the disgust
 - e. Cut it down...it's useless
- 3. The plea for patience (v. 8)

(8) "Sir," the man replied, "leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it."

- a. The gardener
 - b. Let me give it one last effort
 - 1. Dig and loosen the soil
 - 2. Work fertilizer into the soil

(9) If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down."

- 4. "One more year"
 - a. The hard work of the gardener
- 5. The ax is already resting at the root of the tree
 - a. Luke 3:9 John the Baptist

(9) The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

- b. Israel is the tree
 - c. They really had just one more year to repent
- 6. The ax fell in 66 to 70 A.D.
- 7. Pictured in Matthew 21:18-19

(18) Early in the morning, as he was on his way back to the city, Jesus was hungry. (19) Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, "May you never bear fruit again!" Immediately the tree withered.

8. The lesson applies to each of us
 - a. God has granted you one more year
 - b. What are you going to do with it?
 - c. Kids in school.....a fresh start

III. Some Lessons

A. Each one of us is living on borrowed time

1. Borrowed time can end at any time
 - a. You have no idea how much time is left for you
 - b. This could be God's final call for you
 1. 2,000 people in the twin towers
 - c. What changes would you make if you knew you only had one more year?
2. Joy comes from "living in the now"
 - a. What it means to "Live in the now"
 - b. Each day is a precious gift from God
 - c. Not the past
 - d. Not the future...not next year...NOW
 - e. The when is now...and the where is here
 - f. Start living life to the fullest
3. Limited time and limited opportunities
 - a. This is like the start of a new year

- b. What will you accomplish during the next 12 months
- 4. Vision for the church....do it now!
- 5. Isaiah 55:6

(6) Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

- 6. Another way of saying, "Make hay while the sun shines"

B. God expects more than just leaves

- 1. The apple trees at Crane's Orchard
 - a. Some look so small
 - b. But covered with fruit
- 2. Are you producing fruit?
 - a. Or just taking up space?
- 3. Some trees look healthy but are not
- 4. Religion is often just leaves
- 5. What does fruit look like?
- 6. Do you have a plan?
 - a. What do you want to accomplish in one year....five years?
 - b. Write down your goals
- 7. Every minute is precious
 - a. This year in school...

C. Being sorry isn't enough

- 1. God asks for something called "repentance"
- 2. Turn away from the sin that so easily ensnares you
- 3. The year you gain victory over a besetting sin

D. God is willing to accept the worst sinner

1. Jesus specialized in the tough cases
2. Some of you think you're too far gone
3. The story of Procula and Pilate

“One more year”

E. A young African pastor

I'm a part of the fellowship of the unashamed.
 I have Holy Spirit Power. The die has been cast.
 I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made.
 I'm a disciple of His. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still.

My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure.

I'm finished and done with low living,
 sight walking, small planning, smooth knees,
 colorless dreams, tamed vision, mundane talking,
 cheap living and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need preeminence,
 prosperity, position, promotions or popularity.

I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded or rewarded.

I now live by faith, lean on His presence,
 walk by patience, lift by prayer and labor by His power.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven,
 my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions are few,
 my Guide reliable, my mission clear.

I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured,
 lured away, turned back, deluded or delayed.

I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice,
 hesitate in the presence of the adversary, negotiate at the table of the enemy,
 ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, let up,
 until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up,
 paid up, preached up for the cause of Christ.

I am a disciple of Jesus, I must go till He comes,

give till I drop, preach till all know,
and work till He stops me.