

Driftless Reflections with Pastor Dave

Bible Study

Living with Integrity...No More Wasting Time

September 12, 2020 | Luke 13:1-9

Opening

In the book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey identifies the second habit, "Begin with the End in Mind." Covey challenges the reader to ponder what it might be like to attend your own funeral. At the end of your life, how would you like to be remembered? What would you like people to say about you? What have you achieved in your personal life? This is a great exercise for each one of us as we think about our spiritual lives. If we say that we are followers of Jesus, what should be the fruit of our faith lives? Furthermore, how are we living intentionally today (right now!) to grow in our walk with Jesus? In what areas of your life do you waste time? These are difficult questions, yet in the midst of these questions, the Lord offers grace and another chance.

Prayer...

Father, we admit that we often become lazy in our following Jesus. We don't live intentional lives of discipleship. We waste too much precious time. Forgive us. Thank you that you are a God who expects your people to bear fruit and live productive lives. Thank you that you care about our well-being enough to want more for our lives. You want us to live fully and abundantly. Help us to see areas in our lives that need attention and focus in order that we may grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. In your holy name we pray. Amen.

Into the word.

Luke 13:1-5 (NLT2)

¹ About this time Jesus was informed that Pilate had murdered some people from Galilee as they were offering sacrifices at the Temple. ² "Do you think those Galileans were worse sinners than all the other people from Galilee?" Jesus asked. "Is that why they suffered?" ³ Not at all! And you will perish, too, unless you repent of your sins and turn to God. ⁴ And what about the eighteen people who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them? Were they the worst sinners in Jerusalem? ⁵ No, and I tell you again that unless you repent, you will perish, too."

These verses assume that the reader is familiar with two occurrences where every day, normal people had their lives unexpectedly cut short. Using these occurrences as examples, the people talking to Jesus on this day were trying to get a response from the Teacher. They were inferring that bad things happen to sinful people, yet Jesus' response is clear and to the point. Jesus tells them, "I tell you, no!"

• *Can you think of examples from your own life or people you know who believe that bad things happen to sinful people?*

• *Why do you think this is a common understanding even in our day and age?*

Jesus levels the field. “Unless you repent, you too will all perish.” Jesus is claiming that all people are sinners and all people need to repent of their sins. He is teaching that bad things happen to all people. None are more righteous than others because all are sinful and broken. We all need to repent and turn from our sin.

- *Why is it so hard to admit that we are sinners and cannot achieve our own salvation?*

- *What obstacles get in the way?*

- *How does our culture work against us in this understanding?*

Luke 13:6-9 (NLT2)

⁶ Then Jesus told this story: “A man planted a fig tree in his garden and came again and again to see if there was any fruit on it, but he was always disappointed. ⁷ Finally, he said to his gardener, ‘I’ve waited three years, and there hasn’t been a single fig! Cut it down. It’s just taking up space in the garden.’ ⁸ “The gardener answered, ‘Sir, give it one more chance. Leave it another year, and I’ll give it special attention and plenty of fertilizer. ⁹ If we get figs next year, fine. If not, then you can cut it down.’”

Jesus teaches a parable about a worthless fig tree. For three years, this fig tree hasn’t produced any fruit. It is not only using up space in the vineyard, it is also sucking nutrients out of the soil. This fig tree is a waste. Judgment is proclaimed, “Cut it down!” The man who tends to the tree pleads on behalf of the fig tree. He asks for one more year. He wants a little grace to make the tree productive. The clock is ticking in each of our lives. None of us is guaranteed a long life (vs. 1-5) and the parable teaches us that God expects us to be productive in our lives. God wants to bear fruit in our lives. God is calling us to stop wasting time. There is urgency for each one of us to “bear fruit.”

- *In what areas of your life do you need to “bear fruit”?*

- *How are you wasting time?*

- *How do you need to grow in your life as a disciple of Jesus Christ?*

- *What steps do you need to take in order to bear fruit?*

- *What obstacles are standing in your way?*

As disciples of Jesus Christ, living with spiritual integrity requires hard work and intentionality. God calls us to be ready and not waste time. Remember, however, the parable ends with a word of grace. The gardener asks the owner of the fig tree if he could have a little more time to get ready and, from the silence of the owner, we are left to believe that this request is granted. In other words, if you are not ready at this very moment, it’s not too late. Grace upon grace...this is the Gospel!

- *How can the knowledge of God’s grace help you to move ahead in your faith journey?*

Living it out

- *Begin with the end in mind. At the end of your life, how would you like to be remembered?*
- *Name some attributes that you would like people to say about you.*
- *What did your discipleship look like?*
- *How did you impact the Kingdom of God?*
- *When did you bear fruit and share the love of Jesus Christ with others?*

Prayer...

Lord, give us, your people, a big picture understanding of life. Help us to remember that each and every day is fragile and a gift from you. None of us has guarantees of longevity. Show us how to live intentionally and productively so that we don't waste time but rather make the most of every moment and grow as your disciples. Amen.