

Message Summary

Two weeks ago, Pastor Deric began leading us through Christ's important teaching on bearing fruit for the kingdom of God. Because Christ is coming at a time when we don't expect, we must always be ready for his coming by bearing the fruit of faithful stewardship (Lk. 12:35-48), a stewardship with eternal stakes so high that they guarantee division (12:49-59). This week's passage clarifies more about the fruit God is looking for in Christians: using every opportunity through constant evangelism to win souls for Christ (13:1-9).

The stage is set with the latest Israelite newsflash: the wicked ruler Pilate had killed Israelites from Galilee (Jesus' own hometown!) and mingled their blood with pagan sacrifices (v. 1). Jesus challenges the prevailing Jewish commentary (tragedies always result from the victims' evil) by teaching that the victims were not worse sinners than other Galileans. Rather, for those who don't repent, *"you will all likewise perish"* (v. 3). Similarly, those who died at the fall of a recent tower in Siloam were not worse sinners than Jesus' present examiners (v. 4). Whatever political affiliations, education, or life circumstances they may have had are irrelevant. Did they know God? Do you know God? Jesus' teaching addresses more than mere physical death – all are sinners, and all sinners deserve everlasting punishment apart from the Father in the Lake of Fire. Thus, those who are spared the effects of natural disasters are not themselves superior to the victims. Rather, all of us alike are souls in desperate need of a Savior.

Such eternal matters, however, cannot stop with us. God is looking for the fruit of mission, to proclaim his excellencies to the nations around us (cf. 1 Pt. 2:9). To live in a selfish separation from the lost is to exchange our purpose of proclamation for "Camelots," places of worldly comfort that insulate us from the eternal destinies of people right around us. Jesus' warning comes through the story of a man whose fig tree was fruitless for three years (vv. 6-9). When the man asks the vinedresser to cut it down for its fruitlessness, the vinedresser asks for one more year to see if it bears fruit. The vinedresser represents Christ, and the extra year represents the patience God has on us as sinners. How patient God is to sinners, to preserve our lives long enough to repent, and to bless us with the people who prayed for us, shared the gospel, translated the Bible, and supported ministries that ultimately proclaimed the gospel to us. If God has been so patient with us, surely we must likewise see eternal souls in the people around us, and care as much as Jesus about their eternal destinies.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Where was your life before you knew Christ? Share some of your own story/testimony of how the Lord was merciful to you until you repented.

God designed Israel to be fruitful, and to show such fruit to the pagan nations around them (see esp. Ex. 19:6). What kept Israel from being such a faithful gospel light? (For starters, consider Ex. 16:1-8; Joshua 7:10-26; 1 Kings 11:1-8; Jonah 1-4; Malachi 1:8-14.) Do any of these temptations persist today?

Do you depend more on a savvy or ingenious gospel presentation more than prayer, the Holy Spirit, and abiding in Christ to win souls for Christ? Which does Scripture emphasize more? (See esp. Acts 1:14; 13:1-3; Eph. 6:18-20). Has this artificial requirement stopped you from proclaiming the gospel when you did have opportunity?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don't have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family/small group discussion.

1. Is the notion of a “Camelot” – a perfect, blissful, but fictional place – keeping you from reaching out to the lost around you? Do you live in an “insulated safety deposit box”? How does this text drive us from our Camelots to the lost?
2. Like the prevailing Jewish thought of Jesus’ day, is it easy for you to think of others’ sins in judgmentalism and avoid the evil realities of our own hearts?
3. How are you tempted to view and evaluate the people around you (e.g., through education, political affiliation, respective high school, athleticism, etc.)? Do you think more like Jesus, or more like the world, about people? How can you be more intentional this week to remember the eternal destinies of the souls you encounter daily?
4. Fruit-bearing trees are connected to sources of water and nutrients. Is it a temptation to bear fruit apart from abiding in Christ? How can you more deeply root your life in abiding with Christ this week (see esp. Jn. 15:1-17), and so bear fruit?
5. C.S. Lewis considered one soul’s salvation of greater importance than all the literature in the world, but still used his vocation in literature to the glory of God as a means of evangelism. What opportunities does your vocation afford to do the same?
6. What are places you go every week (e.g., grocery stores, gas stations) or people you are around every week (e.g., neighbors, classmates, family members) where/to whom you can proclaim the gospel? What opportunities can you redeem this week to bear the fruit of evangelism?
7. How can you be more intentional about placing yourself where unbelievers are?
8. How does this text teach us to read news/current events in light of the gospel? How can you use the news/current events this week as a platform to share gospel truths?

Prayer

- Pray for Our Church:
 - Thank God specifically for the time God allowed you, and all the instruments He sovereignly orchestrated, for you to repent.
 - Pray that our church would develop eternal eyes to prioritize people’s state with God more than their worldly achievements
 - Pray that God would protect our church from an insulated culture and drive us to the needy people all around us
- Pray for Our Community:
 - Ask God to make CFC as concerned for the eternal destinies of people around us as He is. Ask Him to provide specific opportunities this week for us to share the gospel, and ask that such efforts would bear the fruit of a great harvest of souls (see esp. Mt. 9:37-38; 13:23).
 - Pray that God would bring many unbelievers to the Do Manly Things campout this weekend (March 31-April 1), and that CFC would be faithful to proclaim the gospel there.
- Pray for Our World:
 - Pray that CFC would have many opportunities to proclaim the gospel in word among the nations, both by bringing people from around the world to Gadsden and by sending many in CFC to the nations. Pray especially for short-term trips from CFC members this summer.
 - Pray for B & B Taylor and family, that they would take advantage of every opportunity to proclaim the gospel in their mission field.