



THE GOSPEL OF  
**Luke**

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 13:1-9**

To understand how our need for repentance levels the ground we stand on.

## “Indiana Jones and Repentance”

2021 marked the 40th anniversary of the final movie in the original Indiana Jones trilogy titled *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. There is a pivotal moment in the movie when Jones is hanging from the edge of a chasm, attempting to grab a hold to the very goblet that supposedly once held the blood of Christ in the original last supper. Risking his life, nearly about to fall to his death, Jones reaches out closer and closer until just the tips of his fingers brushes across the goblet. At that moment, Jones’ father appears above him on the top of the chasm and calls out to Jones, “Junior, take my hand! Take my hand!” After a few moments, Jones concedes and moves away from the goblet back to his dad to be pulled up and saved from certain death.

While it is not a perfect illustration, it does present a practical picture of what repentance looks like. Jones has to relinquish his desires (the goblet) to grab the hand of his pleading father in order to not die. Repentance requires the same of us; to relinquish our own wants and desires and to take the hand of our Heavenly Father who calls towards repentance and life. The work of the Spirit is necessary, and there are a few other theological realities that are present, but it’s in general a clear picture of turning away from what we desire in our flesh and turning towards our Father to receive life. In Luke 13:1-9, Jesus gives a discourse on the need for repentance, and how our need levels the ground we stand on.

## Are You Any Better?

In verses 1 through 5, Jesus compares the victims of two contemporary and well-known tragedies to His current audience in an effort to make them consider whether or not they are morally superior to them. The reason for this exercise is simple; people believed that if an especially bad thing happens to someone, it's because they *deserved* it. Tragedy was a sign of divine punishment. However, this is not actually true. Tragedy happens because we live in a fallen and sinful world. Jesus uses two examples that were known to His audience that seemed like divine judgment in order to teach them that the same thing could happen to them as well, and thus they are in need of repentance before they die. Below are breakdowns of the two examples.

### **BLOOD MINGLING**

Verse 1 begins with: "There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices." It's hard to know for sure what exact incident this refers to, but the details give us enough information to make an educated guess. James Edwards writes, "Josephus and Philo mention three other instances in which Pilate unleashed (or was prepared to unleash) violence on his subjects, each of which involved his disdain for Jewish religious customs and his intractability in the face of Jewish protests."<sup>1</sup>

Sacrifice in the Temple was a multiple step process. The priests would first gather the blood of the various animals that was to be poured out on the altar of God. However, the priests were not in charge of the actual slaughtering of the animals; the individual people were tasked with that. This story indicates that some Galileans were caught in the act of slaughtering animals for the purpose of sacrifice and killed by Roman guards, and thus their own blood was mixed into the buckets that were intended only for animal blood for a sacrifice. This would have been an abomination to the sacrificial system and to God Himself (Deut. 12:31).

Whether their actual blood mingled with the animal blood and was poured out on the altar of God is not clear, nor is it really the point; it was a tantalizing, sensational story being passed around to insinuate that those men must have done something really terrible that no one else knew about and God was punishing them for it by allowing them to die in a spectacularly awful manner. Jesus understands this, and thus He questions them in verse 2: "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way?" In other words, He is calling them to account of their own lives and sin in comparison to these now deceased individuals. After giving them a moment to consider, He follows this by saying in verse 3 "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." In other words, death is awaiting all of us, and what follows death is the same for everyone regardless of how morally upright they think they are. The only thing that separates one person from the next is whether or not they repented in this life.

### **THE FALLING TOWER**

Jesus then follows this story with yet another story in verse 4: "Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them." Apparently, a particular tower in Siloam had unexpectedly fallen and killed eighteen men. Again, Edwards writes, "A specific tower of Siloam is unknown, but in describing the oldest wall around Jerusalem Josephus notes that at a point "above the fountain of Siloam" the wall turned east "towards Solomon's pool" (J.W. 5.145). At this corner juncture a tower may have stood that fell, perhaps in construction or repair."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 391.

<sup>2</sup> *The Gospel According to Luke*, 392.

Wherever this tower was, it apparently had fallen and killed several people. Again, Jesus uses this story to illustrate His point that bad things don't happen as acts of divine judgment but are a result of the fallen world, and unless one repents they too are likewise susceptible to sudden and unexpected death. He says in the next part of verse 4 and into verse 5: "Do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? 5 No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

## A Parable

Jesus then tells a parable of an owner of a fig tree that bears no fruit. Growing discontent with the worthless tree, he instructs the vinedresser to "cut it down" (Lk. 13:7). The vinedresser, however, makes an appeal in verses 8 and 9: "Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. 9 Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down." The parable is meant to illustrate a hard-hearted individual who has not repented of their sin. They are guilty of sin and deserving of judgment. However, an extended period of time and attention has been given to them to repent and bear fruit. The act of digging around the tree would break up the hard ground and allow for nutrients to seep into the roots, an allusion to what happens to the heart when it is broken down by the proclaiming of the Gospel. However, this time of mercy will not last forever. At some point, if after no fruit is brought about, judgment will come.

## What About Now?

The force of this passage illustrates the imminent need for repentance. Death is a reality awaiting all people and unless you repent, *you* will pay for your sin. The good news is there is good news! Jesus' Gospel is sufficient to bring about repentance, but it must be heard, and if it is to be heard, it must be proclaimed (Rom. 10:13-15). This passage illustrates the need for repentance for non-believers, and the need to proclaim the Gospel for believers. Time is limited.

## Study Questions

### Day One

1. Read Luke 13:1. What did the crowds say to Jesus? What event were they speaking about? Why did they bring this up? What point were they trying to make?

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2. Read Luke 13:2-3. In your own words, summarize Jesus' response to them.

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### Day Two

1. Read Luke 13:4-5. What event does Jesus use as an illustration? How does this add to His point?

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2. Read Luke 13:6. How does Jesus' parable begin?

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### Day Three

1. Read Luke 13:7. What does the owner of the fig tree instruct the vinedresser to do?

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2. Read Luke 13:8. What does the vinedresser suggest instead? What does this represent?

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### Day Four

1. Read Luke 13:9. What happens if it does bear fruit? What happens if it doesn't bear fruit?

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2. Read Romans 10:13-15. How is one saved? What must happen in order for them to believe?

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## Week 51 Discussion: Repentance

In Luke 13:1-9, Jesus describes the importance and urgency of repentance. Talk as a group about your experience (if any) with repentance, and how it has impacted your life, your walk with Jesus, and your relationships with other people.

1. Icebreaker: Describe for the group the moment when you first repented of your sin.
2. What kind of fruit was immediately present in your life after repentance?
3. What kind of fruit took time to develop in your life?
4. Who in your life needs to repent? As a group, write the names down and spend some time intentionally praying for God to reveal Himself to them.
5. In what ways can you be more intentional about sharing the Gospel?
6. How can the church better equip you to share the Gospel?

### Takeaways:

1. Jesus tells the crowds that death could arrive for anyone at any moment, and thus they should repent.
2. Jesus tells a parable to illustrate the time of mercy given in order for repentance to occur.