

Daily Discipleship

Luke 13:1-9

Prayers of Discipleship *To Be Patient*

Focus Question: *How is God being patient with you?*

word of life

If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.” Luke 13:9 (NRSV)

Read Luke 13:1-9

At first glance, this passage appears strange and awkward for Luke, not typical of his writings. It has no parallel in the other Gospels. This passage might need to be read several times to grasp the flow of it.

1. *What is your initial reaction to this passage?*
2. *What do you sense the major theme of the passage?*
3. *Why do you think this passage is part of the Lenten lectionary?*

The passage brings up memories of children who describe the poor behavior of another child with the clear hope of winning favor with the teacher concerning their own actions. In this case the complaint is against the Galileans who took impure blood and mingled it with the sacrifices, making all of it impure. Those who are telling this story are highly offended at such disrespectful, barbaric behavior.

Jesus does not appear to be shocked. Instead, he redirects the attention towards the tattlers by placing the emphasis on *you!* “No, I tell *you*; but unless *you* repent, *you* will all perish as they did.” (Luke 13:3 NRSV) This is repeated again, several verses later, “No, I tell *you*; but unless *you* repent, *you* will all perish just as they did.” (Luke 13:9 NRSV)

In addition, Jesus reminds the crowd of the collapse of Siloam’s tower, killing eighteen people. Not all who die in tragic events are the worse offenders. Bad things can happen to good people.

4. *How might the crowd react to the words of Jesus?*
5. *What is the message for us?*

Jesus shifts the conversation by telling a parable of a man who owns a fig tree, but the tree bears no fruit. Seeing no benefit or beauty in having such a tree, the owner orders the fig tree to be cut down by the gardener. Despite the years invested in growing a fig tree, there is little patience for something so unproductive.

Despite being a servant, the gardener boldly defends the tree and requests one more year, but not a year with the same care of the tree. Instead, the gardener offers to nurture and care for the tree by digging around it and putting manure on it. He concludes with this practical advice, “If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.” (Luke 13:9)

6. *What surprises you about this parable?*
7. *How can Jesus call for repentance and follow his remarks with a parable of patience?*
8. *How are repentance and patience related?*

To repent is to change direction, but that can be difficult. Old habits can be difficult to break, even when the new behavior might bring health and vitality. Ultimately, fruit is expected.

word among us

Prince of Peace, an active, urban congregation in the South, had a legacy of ministry in the community, but recently conflicts and strife had developed within the leadership and threatened to splinter the church. Respect and trust had eroded between the council and the pastor. Consequently, the newly appointed Mutual Ministry was asked to intervene on their first assignment. No one quite knew what to expect from them.

The Council meeting was called to order with the Mutual Ministry team being the first item on the agenda. Tension held the air taut. Slowly and calmly a representative from the Mutual Ministry stood and began with introductory remarks. All was quiet in the room as the group listened – genuinely listened.

The representative lifted up the benefits of dialogue, sharing her own personal story of being a leader in the community during the desegregation of the schools in the schools. Those were difficult days as leaders and lawyers tried to find a common ground. Yet the children, youth, teachers, staff, and community were counting on the leaders finding a way to dialogue and to move forward – and so they did.

Her remarks concluded, “People must choose to dialogue and choose to listen to each other.” The group appeared ready for dialogue, but then she sat down. There was silence. The president moved to the next item on the agenda. *What just happened? What about the dialogue?*

The Mutual Ministry representative never invited dialogue because she felt it just wasn’t the right time. Later, she explained that sometimes patience is needed. Change takes time.

1. *What in your life needs change?*
2. *What conversations and dialogues are needed to bring about that change?*
3. *Is there a need to have an internal dialogue within you to bring about the change?*
4. *How can the Holy Spirit assist?*

Clearly, Jesus expects repentance – changed behavior –as we redirect our attention to follow him. Lent is a reminder to change our ways so we might bear fruit which pleases God. But change is difficult, even if it God who is orchestrating the change. Fortunately, God is a patient God.

The harshness of the owner of the fig tree who wants the tree whacked in order to get a more productive crop is contrasted with a patient gardener who is willing to wait one more year. Both can be used to illustrate God. The first is sometimes used by preachers who want to place the fear of God deep in the hearts of sinners, while the later lifts up God’s patient grace.

5. *Which is closer to your image of God from your childhood?*
6. *How is God nurturing you to produce fruit?*
7. *How is God being patient with you?*

Prayer

Creator of the universe, be patient with us. Please, be patient with us.

Dig Deeper

Isaiah 55:1-9

last word

Change your ways by having
your daily devotions in a different room at a different time
and facing a new direction. Be patient as you listen in a new way to God.



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3/11/07 Page 2 of 2