



Parable of the Unfruitful Fig Tree

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. 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.'

"The gardener answered, 'Sir, give it one more chance. Leave it another year, and I'll give it special attention and plenty of fertilizer. If we get figs next year, fine. If not, then you can cut it down.'"

Jesus tells the parable of the barren fig tree to vividly illustrate his warning that "unless you repent, you will all perish as they did." There are several important truths this parable communicates about God, his patience, and what repentance really means.

Context of the Parable

In context, the reason Jesus tells this parable of the barren fig tree is because "At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices."

Apparently these people were wanting to know if this had happened to these Galileans because they had sinned a great amount. Thus, Jesus asks them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?"

Jesus also ask them, "Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them - do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem?"

After asking each questions, Jesus responds with, "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did."

To further explain his warning, Jesus tells them this parable of the barren fig tree.

Summary of the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

Jesus says, "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none."

The man thus goes to the gardener and says, "'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?'"

The gardener replies, "'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

Meaning of the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree:

Jesus doesn't state his point at the end of this parable of the barren fig tree, because he has already made his point before telling the parable.

He is telling this parable to emphasize that unless humanity repents, they will surely perish.

The barren fig tree represents the people of the world; and its being "barren" represents sin. This idea of the fig tree being barren, and the fact that it is expected to produce fruit, reinforces the idea of

repentance being a real change in actions and thoughts (no longer sinning).

In this story, the barren fig tree is given more time so it can have the opportunity to produce fruit.

However, if the fig tree continues to not produce fruit, eventually it will be cut down.

Essentially, we are fig trees, and if we remain barren then we will be cut down too.

Another way to look at this situation is that, if we imagine that the fig tree could talk (because it represents people), it would be silly if it said "Sorry for being barren" and then it continued to be barren.

Even if the fig tree said "Sorry for being barren," it doesn't change the fact that it will be cut down if it doesn't start producing fruit, no matter how sorry it is.

In reality, the fig tree must not be very sorry, because people who are truly sorry about doing something won't do it again.

If your friend gossips about you, and then says they are sorry, but they continue to gossip about you, then are they really sorry?

If they were really sorry, they would stop gossiping about you.

Likewise, if we continue to fail to truly repent, then we will surely perish, as Jesus says.

Only those who actually repent and "produce fruit" (stop being "barren;" stop sinning) will be allowed to "be saved" from being cut down permanently.