

Luke 13:1-9

"The Fruit of Repentance"

September 7, 2025

1. Intro

- a. On August 29, in the year 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit the city of New Orleans
 - i. Despite warnings that were given days before that this was going to be a MASSIVELY devastating hurricane...
 - 1. Around 150,000 people decided to stay in the city
 - a. And the results were catastrophic
 - 2. If you're not familiar with the layout of New Orleans, the entire city, which sits just off of the Gulf of Mexico, is actually BELOW sea level
 - a. Over the years, they've developed an elaborate system of pumps and levees to prevent widespread flooding
 - i. But in August of 2005, the system just couldn't keep up
 - 3. By the time the hurricane had subsided, over EIGHTY percent of New Orleans was severely flooded
 - a. The total damage after everything was said and done was estimated to be around \$125 BILLION dollars
 - i. But the most tragic number that came out of all of this was that an estimated 1200 to 1400 people lost their lives, most of which were in New Orleans
 - ii. Michael Chertoff, the Secretary of Homeland Security at the time, said that the hurricane, as well as the flooding of New Orleans, was most likely "the worst set of catastrophes in the history of the United States."
 - ii. About a year later, the well-known pastor of Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas, pastor John Hagee, made waves across the nation when he stated on NPR,
 - 1. "Hurricane Katrina was, in fact, the judgment of God against the city of New Orleans."
 - a. "New Orleans," in his own words, "Had a level of sin that was offensive to God"
 - i. And the reason why Hagee was able to state this so conclusively was that "there was to be a homosexual parade in New Orleans on the Monday that Katrina made landfall."
 - b. God saw the heinousness of the sin in New Orleans
 - i. He pronounced judgment upon them
 - 1. And 1400 paid with their lives because of the sin of their city
 - c. Hagee wasn't alone in his assessment of the devastation in New Orleans
 - i. Pat Robertson, Hal Lindsey, even Franklin Graham all came out with similar statements
 - 1. New Orleans is a city KNOWN for its spiritual wickedness
 - 2. Therefore, this MUST be God's hand of judgement upon them, right?
 - b. Eighteen years after Katrina, in February of 2023, the Hatay province in Southern Turkey was similarly laid waste
 - i. At 4:17, on the morning of February 6, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake rolled through the region

1. 11 provinces saw widespread damage, and thousands of lives lost
 - a. One of the hardest hit was the Hatay province, where over two-thousand people lost their lives
 - i. Now, what makes the Hatay province unique is that, in a country that is approximately 99% Muslim, the Hatay province was known to be a nucleus of CHRISTIAN activity
 1. In January of 2023, there were only an estimated 10,000 Christians spread out throughout the entire country of Turkey
 - a. But about a fifth of the Christian population lived in Hatay
 - b. And nearly ALL of them were killed in the Earthquake
 - ii. Two thousand believers, living lives of faithful obedience in an overwhelmingly Muslim country
 - iii. Two thousand believers, living their lives in humble submission to Christ in a country that ranks number 44 on the list of countries where Christians experience the most extreme persecution
 - iv. Two thousand believers – 600 MORE than were killed in Katrina – whose lives were taken in a natural disaster on the other side of the globe
 2. So what happened?
 - a. CLEARLY, according to John Hagee and Hal Lindsey and Franklin Graham, God sovereignly controlled the winds of Katrina to enact his judgment upon the wickedness of New Orleans
 - i. CLEARLY, they experienced such a powerful act of devastation by the hand of God because of the depths of their depravity
 1. CLEARLY, they were the WORST of the sinners in the land, and this is why Katrina was poured out upon them
 3. But what about Hatay?
 - a. What about the two thousand CHRISTIANS who lost their lives in THAT natural disaster?
 - i. Did God lose control of His power that morning?
 1. Did He mean to kill the Muslims, but He accidentally let things go too far and some Christians were killed as well?
 - a. If God uses disaster to judge the wicked, how do we explain things like the earthquake in Hatay?
 - c. This is not a new question, my friends
 - i. In fact, Jesus himself was presented with a similar question in our passage for this morning, which begins in verse 1 of chapter 13
 1. And as we'll see from his answer, the problem is that, far too often, we are asking the WRONG question
 - a. So, verse 1...
2. Luke 13:1-5
 - a. *¹There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²And he answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? ³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. ⁴Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”*

- b. Well, according to most commentators, this story of the Galileans that Pilate killed is not recorded anywhere else in the history of that time
 - i. The historian Josephus makes no record of any such event, nor do any of the other scholars of those days
 - 1. You would think that something like this would have made the history books...
 - a. Think about what the implications are of this story the people are presenting
 - i. Galileans, men of Israel, had gone to make the sacrifices required of them by the law of God
 - 1. So, presumably, these men were on the Temple grounds
 - a. The animals they had brought were being sacrificed
 - 2. And then the Roman soldiers came
 - a. No reason for the attack is given, but apparently these Roman soldiers had orders to specifically kill these Galileans
 - b. And these men were executed on the spot...
 - i. Not in a prison
 - ii. Not in the streets
 - iii. But in the very Temple grounds of the God of Israel
 - c. And their blood was mingled in with the sacrifices that were placed upon the altar of God
 - ii. How could such a story NOT make the headlines?
 - 1. How could such a story NOT be widely circulated as a condemnation against the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate?
 - 2. Well, this omission from the history books has led to the speculation that maybe this event never happened at all...
 - a. Maybe it was just an urban myth that had grown and been embellished over time
 - i. That's entirely possible, but what we need to see is that, for Jesus, IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER whether this story is true or not
 - ii. What matters to Jesus is the conclusion that the people have made, regardless of whether this was fact or fiction
 - 1. And it is clear from Jesus' response that the people brought up these Galileans, because they believed these Galileans were extraordinary SINNERS
 - a. How else could you explain the horrific deaths that they supposedly experienced?
 - i. Isn't the atrocity of the circumstances EVIDENCE that they must have been WICKED men?
 - 1. Sure, they might have been bringing their sacrifices into the Temple, but man, they MUST have had some hidden or unconfessed sin that God was judging them for
 - a. How else do you explain what happened to them?
 - iii. And Jesus says to the people, "Do you really think THAT is why they suffered in such a way?"
 - 1. And then he drops an absolute bomb into the conversation...
 - a. That wasn't the reason at all... but unless YOU repent, you will all likewise perish!
 - 2. You can almost see their jaws drop wide open, can't you?
 - a. Whoa, Jesus... where did THAT come from?!
 - i. We were talking about THOSE people OVER THERE...

- i. As a part of them being created in the image of God, Adam and Eve were given a will that was free to choose what they wanted to do with their lives
 - 1. They could either choose to humbly and joyfully submit to God's rule and reign over their lives, and potentially live forever in the peace of God's presence...
 - 2. Or, they could decide that they didn't want God telling them what to do, and they could choose to usurp His rule, and place themselves upon the thrones of their life
 - a. Adam and Eve chose themselves over God
 - b. Just as you or I would have done if we were faced with the very same choice
 - i. And EVERYTHING changed
- e. The first thing that changed with the fall was that mankind lost Paradise
 - i. In the first couple of chapters of Genesis, we are presented with a picture of absolute beauty and perfection
 - 1. Just try to imagine what the Garden of Eden must have been like...
 - a. Everything was lush and beautiful
 - i. All the plants were there to provide Adam and Eve with nourishment
 - 1. There were no plants that would have been toxic to humans...
 - 2. There were no weeds or thorns or poison ivy
 - a. The Garden was a place of flourishing and peace and provision
 - i. But it wasn't just the plants that were amazing
 - ii. The Garden was also teeming with all sorts of beasts and birds and insects...
 - 1. And they all lived in peace and harmony with Adam and Eve
 - a. Adam and Eve didn't have to fear that the lions might eat them
 - b. They didn't have to worry about being mauled by bears
 - c. I don't have any evidence to back this up, but I would be willing to bet that that the mosquitos didn't bite, and the flies didn't pester back then either
 - i. It was ALL perfect
 - 2. But that's not even the best part about the Garden
 - a. In Genesis 3:8, we read these amazing words, that Adam and Eve...
 - i. *"Heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the cool of the day..."*
 - 1. The Bible doesn't give us any indication that this was a surprising thing to happen
 - 2. Instead, it is just presented to us matter-of-factly, as if the expectation was,
 - a. "Well of course God was walking in the Garden... where else would He be?"
 - ii. Isn't that what we do when we plant a bunch of gardens and flowerbeds?
 - 1. Isn't the best part about all of it that, after everything is planted and it starts growing...
 - a. You get to walk through your gardens and enjoy all the hard work you just did?

3. In those early days in the Garden, the plants were luscious... the animals lived in peace and harmony...
 - a. And God walked with man
 - i. My friends, there is NOTHING on this earth that even comes close to comparing to THAT reality
 1. The God who created EVERYTHING chose to dwell amongst His creation
 - a. It was all VERY GOOD indeed
 - ii. And then the man and the woman decided that all of that was not enough
 1. They ate from the one tree that God said not to
 - a. And those who once walked in unfathomable blessing, now fell under a devastating curse
 - i. The woman who took the first bite from the fruit turned and blamed the serpent
 1. And as a result of her sin, childbirth is now excruciatingly painful
 2. And wives will forever have the desire to usurp their husband's authority
 - a. She who had been created to be her husband's help and joy and blessing, now would be contrary to his role in their marriage
 - b. But it fared worse for the man...
 2. For Adam had been standing right next to her the whole time that Satan's deception was happening
 - a. He whom God had designed to lead, instead stood by, completely passive in it all
 - b. And then, after she had taken a bite, he followed her lead, and did the very same thing
 - i. And as a result of his sin, the whole earth would be transformed
 1. The ground would now bring forth thorns and thistles
 2. The land that was once a blessing to work and to cultivate would now bring pain
 3. Man's life would now be one of sweat and toil and heartache
 - ii. And it would end in death
 1. As God said to him, "*For you are dust, and to dust you shall return.*"
 3. As a result of the curses given in the garden, children are now born into the world with great pain...
 - a. Physical pain for sure, but there is often great emotional pain, isn't there, when our kids choose to rebel and walk the broad path of destruction
 4. As a result of the curses given in the garden, the gift of marriage between one man and one woman for an entire lifetime has now been tarnished
 - a. Divorce runs rampant in our day, thousands of years after the Fall, and yet the causes for turmoil are still so often the same
 - i. Poor leadership, or apathy, from the husband
 - ii. An unwillingness to be submissive from the wife
 1. And this blessing that is meant to be an earthly picture of Christ and his church so often ends in turmoil and pain
 5. As a result of the curses given in the garden, mankind now experiences death

- a. After God pronounced the curses upon man, and clothed him in animal skins...
 - i. The very next act was to banish them from the Garden, so that they would no longer be able to eat from the Tree of Life and live forever
 - 1. Mankind was formed from the dust... and to the dust we will all return
 - a. Maybe from cancer
 - b. Maybe in a tragic accident
 - c. Maybe simply from old age
 - 2. Death comes to us all, and it always results in loss for those who remain behind
- 6. But the curse goes beyond mankind, doesn't it?
 - a. In Romans 8, Paul reminds us that the curse has extended to ALL of creation
 - i. Paul writes in verses 19-22
 - 1. *¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.*
 - ii. The creation... the universe... the earth... all that is upon the earth...
 - 1. Paul says that it ALL has been subjected to futility
 - 2. It ALL is under the bondage of corruption
 - 3. It ALL groans together
 - iii. Friends, this is why mosquitos bite and annoy
 - 1. This is why the wild animals devour each other, and why they sometimes attack humans
 - 2. This is why earthquakes destroy in Turkey, and hurricanes destroy in New Orleans
 - 3. And this is why towers fall in Siloam
 - b. When mankind fell into sin in the garden, the entire creation was plunged into futility
 - i. And Paradise was indeed lost
 - 1. And now, it is not just the evil and the wicked who die
 - 2. It is EVERYONE
 - a. Both saints and sinners died in the devastation in New Orleans
 - b. Both saints and sinners died in the destruction of Hatay
 - i. For we have lost the Paradise that man once lived in... the place where God walked in the cool of the day
- f. The second thing that changed with mankind's fall in the Garden was that wickedness is now INCREASING in the hearts of men
 - i. This began almost immediately in the storyline of the Bible, didn't it?
 - 1. In just one generation, one of Adam's sons, Cain, murdered another of Adam's sons, Abel
 - a. And it was only a couple of chapters later, in Genesis 6:5, that the Bible tells us,

- i. *5The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*
 - 1. And it GRIEVED Him to His heart that He had made man on the earth
- b. This would lead to the global catastrophe of the flood, where God would wipe the earth clean, and start everything over with Noah and his family and the animals that were on the Ark
 - i. You would think that man would have learned from such a tragic lesson...
 - 1. But again, just a few chapters later, in Genesis 11, we encounter the story of the Tower of Babel
 - a. Mankind has refused to obey God's command to be fruitful and fill the earth...
 - i. And instead has chosen to all gather in one location to build a tower to the heavens
 - ii. They cared nothing about the name of God... they simply wanted to make a name for themselves
 - 2. God did not send another flood, but He instead confused the languages of man, and scattered them across the face of the earth
 - c. And from those days, all the way throughout the rest of the Scriptures, it is a story of man's refusal to bow to God, and submit to His rule and reign over their lives
 - i. Even the people that God chose for Himself, the Israelites, would fall into this same pattern
 - 1. God would rescue them from some tragedy... they would return to Him with fasting and weeping...
 - a. And then a short time later, they would run off after some foreign god
 - i. It's no wonder that God so often in the Scriptures refers to His people as an ADULTEROUS generation
 - 2. But then Jesus comes into the picture, and everything changes for the good, right?
 - a. Except the fact that two years into his life, King Herod tries to have him murdered
 - b. At the age of thirty, the religious leaders in Jerusalem are already looking for ways to have him killed
 - c. Within months, his own friends and neighbors from his own hometown of Nazareth are trying to throw him off a cliff
 - d. And within three years, his own people cry out, "Crucify him!"
 - i. And the Son of God is whipped and beaten by the Romans, and hung upon the cross to die like a common thief
 - 3. Well, surely after that, things MUST calm down a little, right?
 - a. Well, within the next 40 years, many of Jesus' disciples will have been executed, including the Apostle Paul
 - i. The evil emperor of Rome, Nero, would begin bringing the followers of Christ into the arena for sport and entertainment...

1. Where they would be torn apart by wild beasts, or run through with swords, or burned at the stake
 - a. One of Nero's favorite uses for the Christians was to tie them up high on poles, and then light them on fire so his gardens could be illuminated at night
 - b. This wickedness and evil would continue on for the next two centuries
4. Ah, but if you are a student of history, you know that things get much better in the three hundreds under Emperor Constantine, right?
 - a. Christianity is not only legalized in the Roman Empire, but it very soon becomes the state mandated religion
 - i. And all is well
 1. That is, until a NEW form of evil takes over
 - a. The evil of power and corruption and greed
 - ii. Within just a few centuries, the leaders in the church would now be the wealthiest and most powerful men in the lands
 1. Gold and silver and precious jewels would begin to flow into the church
 2. The Church would soon put down its cross, and pick up a sword in its crusades against the Muslims
 3. The Papacy would eventually be overrun by corruption
 - a. And the gift of salvation would be put up for sale
 - i. Bring your coins into the church, and purchase the freedom for your loved ones who are stuck in purgatory
 - b. And the cathedrals got bigger and more elaborate
 - i. And the priests and the bishops and the popes got fatter and fancier
 5. Well, the Reformation solved all of that, didn't it?
 - a. The church certainly made some tremendous moves toward the positive, as many returned back to the Word of God
 - i. But even in those days, the Church couldn't shake her desire for political power
 - ii. Even in those days, the Church couldn't shake her love of the sword
 1. And many continued to die at the hands of the Christians, all in the name of Jesus
 6. My friends, it is painfully obvious that NOTHING has changed for the better in our world today
 - a. We've had two world wars in the past century
 - b. Smaller wars are still raging all over the world today
 - c. Divisiveness runs rampant in almost every sphere of society
 - i. And what is the church doing here in America, the supposed "center" of Christianity on the earth?
 1. We're building multi-million-dollar auditoriums and activity centers
 2. We're spending countless hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to convince the world that we are "fun"
 3. And we're still incessantly chasing after money and power and influence...

- a. Everything that Jesus stood in complete opposition to in his lifetime
- 7. My friends, if we are willing to have eyes to see it, then we must acknowledge that wickedness is indeed increasing in the hearts of men
 - a. It is all as a result of the fall in the Garden
 - b. And this wickedness has permeated into the world, AND into the church
- g. Which all serves to remind us that the most devastating thing that changed coming out of Adam and Eve's fall in the Garden is this...
 - i. We have ALL become guilty
 - 1. ALL of us
 - a. As Paul writes in Romans 3, "*There is no one righteous... no not one. No one seeks for God, all have turned aside... together they have become worthless... no one does good – not even one.*"
 - b. We have ALL fallen short of the glory of God
 - i. No matter where you fall on the spectrum of good people and bad people
 - ii. The reality is, GOD's standard of goodness is still all the way up here
 - 1. And it is unattainable by ANY of us
 - 2. And in this reality that the Scriptures lays out before us, we are given the answer to our question...
 - a. Why do bad things happen to good people?
 - i. The answer is, that is the wrong question
 - 1. For, when we hold ourselves up against GOD'S standard of goodness, we are ALL evil
 - a. For in Adam, we are ALL guilty in our sin
 - 2. As Paul says in Romans 5:12
 - a. *12... sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to ALL men because ALL sinned*
 - b. The judgment following one trespass brought condemnation...
 - c. Death reigned through that one man...
 - d. One trespass led to condemnation for all men...
 - e. By one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners...
 - i. Paul states these truths over and over and over...
 - ii. We are ALL guilty
 - ii. And therefore, Jesus says to us, "Do you think that the 1400 who died in New Orleans were worse sinners than all of you? No, I tell you; but unless YOU repent, you will all likewise perish."
 - 3. This word that Jesus uses for "perish" doesn't just mean death... for as we've already stated,
 - a. ALL of us will die
 - i. No, this word "perish" is far worse than death
 - 1. It means FULLY destroyed...
 - 2. PERMANENTLY cut off...
 - 3. UTTERLY lost
 - b. My friends, Jesus' emphasis in this passage is simple and straightforward

- i. If you do not repent, you will experience an eternal separation from God
 - 1. If you do not turn away from your sin, and turn to God, you will be permanently cut off
 - 2. If you do not turn away from your own life, and surrender EVERYTHING to Christ, you will be utterly lost
 - 3. Unless you repent, you will likewise perish
- 4. So repent, friend, while the vinedresser is still willing to show you His grace and His patience
 - a. For as Jesus says in the following parable...

3. Luke 13:6-9

- a. *6And he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. 7And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?’ 8And he answered him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. 9Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”*

 - i. This is the crucial question for today, for all who have heard the Word proclaimed here this morning...
 - 1. If God were to examine your life RIGHT NOW, would he find the fruit that He is looking for?
 - a. When the religious leaders came to John the Baptist out in the wilderness, he rebuked them for the hypocrisy in their hearts...
 - i. And he challenged them with these words,
 - 1. “Bear fruit in keeping with repentance”
 - b. So what does the fruit of repentance look like?
 - i. Well as I said just a moment ago, first and foremost, it looks like surrender
 - 1. It looks like humbly choosing to lose your life in this world, that Christ may use it in any way that HE desires
 - 2. It looks like joyfully choosing to pick up your cross, each and every day, as a living sacrifice before a holy God
 - 3. It looks like loving the Lord your God with ALL your heart, and ALL your mind, and ALL your soul, and ALL your strength
 - 4. It looks like loving your neighbor as yourself
 - 5. It looks like loving and cherishing the Word of God, immersing yourself in the Scriptures as often as you possibly can
 - 6. It looks like living those Scriptures out, through the power of the Holy Spirit
 - 7. It looks like loving your enemies, and praying for those who persecute you
 - 8. It looks like being willing to take the message of the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to WHOEVER the Lord brings across your path
 - 9. It looks like selling your possessions and giving to the poor
 - 10. It looks like devoting yourself to a local church body, where you commit to studying the Word together, fellowshipping together, breaking bread together, and praying together
 - 11. It looks like saying “Yes, Lord,” before you even know the question
 - ii. Friends, at the heart of all that could be said, the fruit of repentance... the TRUE fruit of repentance...
 - 1. Looks like falling to your knees before the Lord Jesus Christ, surrendering EVERYTHING to him as King, and placing ALL your faith in him

- a. And when you finally do surrender everything to him in faith, you will no longer fear Roman governors sending their soldiers after you into the Temple to take your life
 - i. You will no longer fear any unstable towers in Siloam
 - 1. You will not fear hurricanes or earthquakes, or any other destructive circumstance brought about by fallen man or a corrupted earth
- 2. For in your repentance, you will find REST in the love of Christ, and the grace and mercy of the Father
 - a. And not even death can take that away from you
 - i. So examine your hearts this morning, my friends...
 - ii. Do you see the fruit of repentance?
 - iii. Do you see the fruits that have come as a result of a TRUE, LIVING faith in Jesus Christ?
 - 1. I pray that the Vinedresser will indeed find MUCH fruit in your heart, when it comes your time to stand before His throne
 - 2. I pray that He will indeed see Christ in you!