



“Entry into the Kingdom”
Luke 13:1-9

Idea: Repentance, as the fruit of faith, permits entry into the Kingdom of God.

Intro: Jesus said in Luke 4:43, *“I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God...for I was sent for this purpose.”* As we read through the Gospels, we see that Jesus continually described the Kingdom in terms that one cannot point to and identify specifically, but in every story, the Kingdom was the essential piece. The Kingdom is mixed in and present already. It is like leaven in a loaf of bread. A person cannot find the leaven after the loaf is baked, but the loaf would be completely deflated and radically different if the leaven were missing. The Kingdom is like a tiny mustard seed that sprouts into a giant bush. It is impossible to find the original mustard seed after the bush has grown, but birds could not nest in the branches were it not for the seed.

Jesus explained that the Kingdom of God was not coming in ways that one could observe,” No one will be able to say, “Look, here it is,” or “It is over there.” The reality for His disciples was that the Kingdom of God was already within and among them.

This concept is such a colossal paradigm shift—an upside-down way of looking at an inside-out world. And it is as disruptive now as when Jesus spoke it. He was telling the people then (and us now) that we will not be able to identify the Kingdom geographically or point it out in any one singular event. Even though the fullness of the Kingdom is not yet realized, the Kingdom has already begun, and we are a vital part of that realization. It is everywhere, and it is now. It is within us and among us and worth losing all we have to gain it.

As we have worked our way through the first half of Luke’s Gospel, we have seen this emphasis on the Kingdom. Chapter 12 ended with a call for Kingdom readiness among Jesus’ followers and a warning about the division the Kingdom would create on earth, even among family members. Today, as we pick back up in chapter 13, we are confronted with a requirement for entry into the Kingdom of God. That requirement is repentance.

Read Luke 13:1-9.

Inquiry: In chapter twelve, the words Jesus exchanges with others become more and more aggressive. He is equally aggressive in the first passage of chapter thirteen. The Lord Jesus is not in the habit of telling people what they want to hear. Instead, He tells them what they need to hear, and what the people then and the people now need to hear is a message about repentance. Without repentance there can be no salvation, which means there is no entry into the Kingdom of God.

When we think theologically about the doctrine of salvation, we see that God’s choice of us is unconditional, but our receiving salvation is not. Sinners are required to repent and believe. These are twin decisions, which

when taken together are called conversion. Repentance and faith are not the same thing, but they are joined at the hip.

Conversion, as Wayne Grudem defines it, is “our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sin and place our trust in Christ for salvation.” These two distinguishable yet inseparable parts are like two sides of a coin. It is impossible to have one without the other. Repentance and faith are the conditions for salvation. They occur simultaneously and taken together make up the act of conversion. Jesus and the apostles uphold these conditions. Mark tells us that when Jesus began preaching, His message was “*repent and believe*” (Mark 1:15). Paul highlighted the two components of conversion when he reminded the church at Thessalonica how they “*turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God*” (1 Thess 1:9).

Perhaps it is not too difficult for us to recognize and understand the need for faith in Jesus. It makes sense that conversion and entry into the Kingdom would require belief in the gospel message. What might not be so easy for us to recognize is the need for repentance in conversion. In fact, it is possible that we may not even correctly understand biblical repentance. For this reason, it is essential to know what we are discussing. Danny Akin defines repentance as “a change of mind that leads to a change of action.” It is one’s heartfelt willingness to have Jesus save him or her from sin. It is the full apprehension of one’s lostness, the nature of sin, and the inevitable coming judgment that leads the person to renounce sin and turn away from them. In the New Testament the term most often translated as “repent” is the Greek word μετανοέω. It means “a change of mind,” but it carries the fuller idea of “changing one’s way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude with regard to sin and righteousness.”

As Jesus was teaching on the Kingdom, His teaching heated up when some of His listeners brought up a recent atrocity. Some Galileans had been killed by the Roman ruler, and their blood had been mixed with the blood of the sacrifices being offered. As best we can reconstruct the bloodshed, this atrocity took place in the temple at Passover, because that was the only time laymen, Galilean or otherwise, were involved in the slaughter of animal sacrifices. Evidently Pilate thought they were guilty of sedition and had his soldiers cut them down when they least expected it. In that conflict human blood was mixed with lamb’s blood, which was culturally appalling. The reason the listeners brought it up was because it was generally believed that victims of calamities and misfortunes were guilty of extraordinary sins that they had been kept hidden. The blind man in John 9 is a prime example of this kind of understanding.

People who had not experienced such a calamity themselves by default took pride in their obvious goodness and moral superiority, which had seemingly spared them. So, those who brought up this well-known situation wanted Jesus to expound on the moral inadequacies of those Galileans who met such scandalous deaths. They wanted Jesus to further make them feel stable and sanctified, but He refused to play along. Instead, Jesus answered with the ruthless truth. They, like everyone else, was guilty of sin and needed to repent.

This passage informs us that bad things happen to all kinds of people. Tragedies befall both good and bad people. No one is immune to them. In fact, sometimes unthinkable things happen to the most godly and committed people. In view of that, it is helpful to remember that not all tragedy is because of one’s own sins. At the same time, the Bible does clearly teach that all have sinned (Rom 3:23). Therefore, there is a need for all people to repent of sin. Jesus used this extraordinary situation to focus people’s attention on the great need for repentance because without it no one can enter the Kingdom of God. Today, I want you to see that repentance, as the fruit of faith, permits entry into the Kingdom of God. There are four truths about repentance I want you to see and heed.

1. Each person stands equally guilty of sin before Holy God. (vs. 2, 4)

Jesus responded to the listeners by saying, “*Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners...*”. They suspected that the Galileans were great offenders of God since they had been killed so scandalously. Jesus emphasized His point by grabbing another tragedy in the headlines. There had been

a construction accident in Jerusalem, which killed eighteen people. A tower had fallen, and the people became collateral damage. Jesus asked the same question. *“Do you think they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem?”*

The point Jesus made with His questions was that every single person stands guilty before Holy God. Therefore, no one should think of themselves as being in a better moral and relational position with God than someone else. Paul rightly said, *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rom 3:23). Each person stands equally guilty of sin before Holy God.

2. Each person perishes in his or her sin unless there is repentance. (vs. 3, 5)

The listeners and most everyone else in that culture might have thought the reason for the victims' demise was their own sin, but Jesus made it clear that every person is under the just judgment of Holy God because of their own sin. All have sinned, so no one is immune to its sickness.

The victims were not unique. They were run-of-the-mill sinners like the rest of us. Therefore, Jesus told them, and He tells us today that *“unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”* Paul articulates this truth in theological terms by saying, *“For the wages of sin is death...”* (Rom 6:23). The just payment for your sin and my sin is spiritual and physical death. Each person who dies in his or her sin will experience eternal separation from the God for which they were created in a place of eternal torment called hell.

Each person perishes in his or her sin. If this were the end of the story and the destination of all of us, then God would be just, but we would be in the most awful state imaginable. Thankfully, the story for all who will listen does not end here. Paul continues in Romans 6 by saying, *“but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Thankfully, repentance enables the reception of eternal life. This brings us to a third truth about repentance.

3. Each person receives the opportunity to repent of sin and bear spiritual fruit. (vs. 6-8)

This parable rests on three symbolisms that were not easily apparent to the pre-cross crowd of listeners. Most likely they only understood it as a challenge to bear spiritual fruit or else be judged. The symbols became clear after the death and resurrection of Christ, so the early church gleaned from its gracious message. The fig tree represents Israel, as it sometimes did in the Old Testament (Jer 24:1-10; Hosea 9:10; Micah 7:1). Those listening to Jesus, as well as us today, were to examine themselves through the metaphor of the fig tree. The owner is God the Father, and the vinedresser represents Christ. They are in concert, but, without interrupting their harmony, the owner argues from the logic of righteousness, while the vinedresser reasons from the logic of mercy.

The owner had the fig tree planted, and he expected it to bear fruit. When it did not produce fruit, he wanted it cut down and removed. The vinedresser wanted the fig tree to produce fruit, so he asked for more time. He stated that he would cultivate and fertilize around the tree for another year so that fruit might be produced.

Two things become apparent in this parable. First, Jesus gives ample opportunities to respond in faith and repentance to the gospel. Jesus will use whatever means necessary to till and fertilize the soil of your heart so that the fruit of repentance is evident. Second, Jesus does not give an infinite amount of time to respond in faith and repentance to the gospel. The tree had four years. You may be given ten, twenty, or fifty years to respond, but the window does close at some point. You see, each person receives the opportunity to repent of sin and bear spiritual fruit. This brings us to a final truth.

4. Each person shoulders the weight of his or her decision on repentance. (vs. 9)

When a sinner responds in faith and repentance to the gospel it is well and good with that person's soul. He or she is made right with God the Father and adopted as a child of God, receiving the full rights and responsibilities of royalty. However, when a sinner responds in further rebellion to the gospel it is not well with that person's soul. He or she is awarded the fair wage for their rebellion, which is eternal death and separation from God. They are cut down and thrown out. Each person shoulders the weight of his or her decision on repentance.

Conclusion: This morning, in our Red Lane Bible reading plan, we read the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22. In that parable, the Kingdom of God is compared to a king who threw a wedding feast for his son and sent for his guests. For various reasons the guests declined the invitation, so the king sent his servants out along the roads to invite the commoners to the wedding feast. Many responded to the open invitation to celebrate in the kingdom. They exchanged their clothes of the world for garments of royalty and sat to eat and celebrate. However, there was one man at the dinner who was not wearing the wedding garment. The king confronted the man because he was not wearing the proper clothing. He was escorted out and sent to his proper place of torment.

You are like those commoners who received an open invitation from the King to enter and celebrate in the Kingdom. You are not worthy to be there on your own because of your sin and rebellion. Left to yourself you would rightly perish in your sin, but the King has given you the opportunity through faith and repentance to exchange your ragged worldly garments for royal, white ones. The decision is yours to make. The one who desires to enjoy the blessing of the Kingdom without the fruit of faith, which is repentance, will receive the King's fair judgment. The decision is yours. You can repent and have the old garments of sin removed so that you might put on the fresh and clean garments of righteousness, or you can wear the old ones all the way to hell. It comes down to your decision to repent of sin.

Repentance, as the fruit of faith, permits entry into the Kingdom of God. What will you do with the invitation the King has put in your hand today? Will you in faith turn to Jesus and away from your sin? Or, will you discard the invitation and live on in your sin and under the King's just judgment?