

Our Purpose For Existence Luke 13:6-9

As I began to study these words of our passage for today, I was reminded of those days of the 1960s, an era when the young people of America seem to fancy themselves as being modern-day philosophers, studying the presumed wisdom of the eastern mystics and asking the universal question of life, that question, "Why am I here? What is the purpose of my existence"?

And folks, may I say with a certainty that each one of us, as Christians, will eventually need to arrive at this same question in our own minds. Because this is a very, very important question, literally essential to our understanding of the meaning of life, our own life, personally, both while we remain here in the flesh and also as we enter into the eternity spoken about in these scriptures. "Why am I here? What is the purpose of my existence"?

And dear friends, until we, you and I as believing born-again Christians begin to ask ourselves this question, and also begin to find the answer to it, we are in danger of living and experiencing an existence on this earth that we really don't want to experience, one that the wise prophet, King Solomon described as being "meaningless", "meaningless", "vanity of vanities, all is vanity".

Listen as I read the words of this simple parable given to us by the Lord Jesus here in Luke chapter 13 and we'll consider these words carefully. Here, the Lord Jesus had just finished speaking to a group of people about their response to their hearing about some Galileans who had been killed by Pilates soldiers and also about some people who had died when a tower had fallen on them. And then He followed those words with this parable. Listen, in verse 6!

⁶And he (the Lord Jesus) 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.'" (Luke 13:6-9)

As we search the depths of our own hearts and as we observe the behaviors of many of the people around us, we can easily see that there is a manner and a way in which we can believe in God, truly believe in Him, but with a belief that is

only to a measure and to an extent that is comfortable to our personality and to our lifestyle, a kind of belief that is enough to satisfy our religious sense, but at the same time allows us to hold on to some, perhaps many, of our old ways.

To all of us who live that way each day, Jesus gave this simple, but demanding warning from verse 5. He said,

⁵ . . . unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:5)

That condition of soul calls to mind the explanation that Jesus gave in the "Parable of the soils" as He spoke about the manner in which certain people receive the "seeds" of His word. In that parable, speaking about the third kind of soil, Jesus said,

²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. (Matthew 13:22)

This third kind of soil describes a strange and confusing condition of soul that lives within many, perhaps most of us, to know that we are truly saved, but still craving and holding on to the many things and habits and behaviors of this world.

We confidently live "saved lives", knowing that we will be able to go into heaven when we die, but all the while also knowing that something very important, something very vital is still missing from our souls.

And the evident proof of that "thing" that is still missing is very glaring once we allow ourselves to take a careful look. That "missing thing" is the simple, but profound lack of any real "fruit" being borne out within our daily lives. Because, for all of us who have been called by His name, Jesus has been very clear and plain about His desires and about the purpose in life that He has called us to be about. We are to go about our day "bearing fruit, much fruit".

Jesus' words, "I came that you might have life and have it more abundantly" are intended to be really real, and really true within the ordinary activities of our daily life.

But still, even with all of His many abundant blessings being showered upon us, for some reason, we can still go about living half-hearted lives, giving very little of ourselves and gaining very little from our fruitless efforts.

Why would that continue to take place within us? It's because, too often, our self-centered thoughts allow us to only consider how we can personally enjoy God's abundant blessings. And we don't get much past that point.

But the real intent of His gift of "abundant life" was for it to reach on out beyond the boundaries of our personal pleasures, on out into the lives of others, producing in us and in them an "abundance of fruit", fruits of righteousness, fruit that will last.

In John chapter 15, Jesus went to great lengths to give us a clear understanding of our role, our purpose in life once we have received His great salvation. He said in John 15,

¹"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. (John 15:1-8)

Let me re-say the words I said a moment ago. For so many, many of us "saved" Christians, there still remains within our souls, a strange and confusing condition. We know that we are truly saved, but we still hold on to so many of the cravings for the things and the habits and the behaviors that once filled and influenced our daily lives before we were saved.

And those cravings and those behaviors continue to work their will and their way within us all throughout the many opportunities and moments of our day, delaying and thwarting and preventing the growth of "Godly fruit" that should come up out of the Vine of Christ.

Folks, as believing Christians, we truly are branches growing out of the Vine of Christ. And we really should, we must, “bear fruit”. It is the answer to the question that was posed a few moments ago. It is our “purpose for existence”, to “bear fruit”. It is who we are and what we are supposed to do.

And again, as we said earlier concerning the warning given by Jesus about our “perishing”, our misguided condition of soul can permit us to live our daily lives, very saved, but at the same time, bearing little or no “fruit” at all, and of very little benefit to the furtherance of the kingdom of God.

And it all takes place within us simply because we do not fully submit our lives and our hearts and our behaviors to Christ our Savior. Yes, we do desperately want Him to be our eternal Savior, but we are unwilling to equally allow Him to be our “Lord”, the one who can direct and guide all of our otherwise misguided activities of daily life.

Such a simple word, “submission”, but the lack of it is what lies at the heart of the difference between the joy-filled eternal life that we are intended to experience, and the more usual joyless and sometimes “severely disabled” daily Christian life that most of us actually experience.

And we must be fully warned by these words of Jesus that there surely will be a severe consequence awaiting all who refuse to submit to His Lordship!

May I ask, “Does that sound unreasonable to you”, that those to whom Jesus has given salvation, He would also require obedience and submission?

It does seem unreasonable to some, and because of their obstinate rejection of His authority over them, they live “unfruitful” lives, slowly but surely “perishing”, each and every day that they live. Truly saved, yes! And they do get to go on into heaven, but sadly, too often living daily lives with wounded souls, doing very little for the Lord and for His people, and with very little to show for their having lived here on this earth.

And no, our “lack of submission” does not have to be of the rebellious kind. And it often isn't. Most of us instead just simply get about our day, using our common sense, having a “lukewarm” relationship with the Lord Jesus, thinking and doing our own will and plans and purposes. But all the while, the more perfect and beneficial plans of God just get ignored.

And even if our lack of submission is not overt or belligerent, whatever form it takes, it is still nonetheless, a lack of submission. And along with it comes wrong choices, causing us to quietly miss out on all those benefits that God's abundant life offers to us.

And even worse, there is no "fruit" being produced from our branches that will benefit others, especially our beloved family members, those who need and depend daily upon the fruits that we should bear for them.

Here in our scripture passage for today, Jesus spoke specifically about this kind of condition of soul. Here He used the analogy of a fig tree and the fruit that it's supposed to bear. And please note that Jesus is being very clear about the expectation that He has concerning those to whom much has been given.

In this unfruitful fig tree, it seems obvious that Jesus is making specific reference to His people, the Israelites. To them, much had been given and much was being required. And their response had been to give back very little. The "fruits" of righteousness that should have been flowing within, and out from, the nation of Israel were often non-existent.

And as this parable tells us, Jesus had been walking among His people Israel for three years, preaching and teaching truths of righteousness, daily watering the soils of their souls. But they had not received Him and His gifts to them of Godly wisdom and salvation. They had chosen instead to remain blinded to who He was as their long-awaited Messiah. And by rejecting Him, they were bearing no fruit.

But dear Christian, as we have been saying here, the same can be very true for you and me. Let me reread the words of our passage for today and let's consider how we, you and I personally fit into this parable. Listen!

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.'" (Luke 13:6-9)

For us, as well as for those Israelites of that day, these words contain the same expectation and the same warning as do the words of John 15, where Jesus said,

¹ "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.
(John 15:1, 5-6)

Here in all of these words, and especially in the words of today's passage, Jesus is telling us clearly that there will come a time when He will return. And at that time, there will be an accounting required of us. We are His branches in the Vine, just as Israel was His fig tree.

And remember His words that we studied in Luke 12:48,

⁴⁸ . . . Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required.
(Luke 12:48)

To those of us who have been saved by Him, Jesus truly is the Master of our souls. He has purchased us with a price, His own blood. And He has the right to demand something of us in return. And that demand is for us to bear "fruit", "much fruit", the "fruits" of obedience, of submission and of righteousness.

Ask yourself, "Is that too much to require of us, especially after everything that Jesus has done for us?" Some do think so!

But to those of us who do not think it is burdensome, He gives these words from 1 John 5,

³For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (1 John 5:3-4)

Dear Christian, hidden deeply within these words is a blessed promise, that as you and I would begin to step on forward and surrender ourselves to the faith that God's Spirit has put within us, we really will begin to take on a whole new attitude towards right and wrong, good and evil.

We will begin to see the matters of our daily life and the people that we encounter within it from a whole new perspective, His perspective. And that is when our life will begin to change, truly change. And that is when we will really begin to “bear fruit”.

That is God’s plan, and that is our “purpose for existence”. These scriptures tell us that we have been “engrafted” into the Vine of Christ. And now, we are fully able to bear His fruits. And we really do need to get on about it.

Listen again and consider the warning that Jesus is giving within this passage. Verse 6,

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.’” (Luke 13:6-9)

Yes, this story is a parable, an allegory. But please know that it is intended to illustrate a very real condition that is taking place within each of our souls, yours and mine, right at this moment.

In our salvation, God has engrafted us into His Vine, the Lord Jesus. And then, to further help and enable us to be and to do all that He plans for us, God has graciously put His Holy Spirit within us. And now, as the words of John 15, and these words of today’s passage plainly tell us, we are being called to respond, to “bear fruit, much fruit, fruit that will last”.

And again, as these words tell us, there surely will come a time of accounting, most assuredly as we pass from this life into eternity, but also, even before that day. Take note that the words of this passage give us a clear understanding that that accountability actually begins now, within our living years.

May I strongly suggest to you and to me that Jesus is, right at this moment, walking through His vineyard, observing you and me, the branches of His Vine, searching for the “fruit” that should be flourishing in us.

Is He, like in this parable of the fig tree finding our branches barren, producing no fruit, just taking up space in this world that could be put to better use? If that be so, we really must take warning.

Yes, He is gracious to us and He will generously give us another opportunity, perhaps another year, perhaps even more. But please understand, He has a plan, and His timing for His plan is not indefinite. He has appointed times in which He will come to inspect His vineyard. And He will expect to find fruit growing there. That is the purpose for which we have been saved, and we must step forward and bear fruit, much fruit.

But if we refuse to allow His fruit to grow up in us, He will surely call us into account, now, in our living years.

This is a serious warning folks! Jesus is a loving Savior, but He is also pure and holy, and He has expectations of us that must be honored.

We must understand that there really is only two pathways of life that we can follow. There is no “in-between pathway” or a “neutral pathway” that we can walk. Our Lord tells us plainly that there is either the “narrow pathway” that leads to life, or there is the “broad pathway that leads to destruction. And we will surely walk one of those pathways.

And unfortunately, the “broad pathway” is the most convenient and most comfortable pathway for most of us, requiring very little of us, especially not requiring “fruits of righteousness”.

And one further warning . . . our not choosing a “pathway” to walk is actually a choice . . . a wrong choice, a very wrong choice.

And God has made it very clear here in His word that each path, whichever one we choose will have its consequences, a life and an eternity of “perishing” or a life and an eternity of blessings.

With such consequences for the choices we make, is not the choice to choose the Lord Jesus the obvious and right choice for you and me to make?

I plead with you and I plead with my own soul, that we surrender ourselves into His plan and into His purposes and allow his fruit to come forth and to flourish within us.

Listen as I close! Deuteronomy 30, verse 19,

¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curses. Therefore choose life.
(Deuteronomy 30:19)

Let's pray.