
Jesus Challenges his Audience on a Number of Levels

Scripture Reading: Luke 13

About this time Jesus was informed that Pilate had murdered some people from Galilee as they were offering sacrifices at the Temple. “Do you think those Galileans were worse sinners than all the other people from Galilee?” Jesus asked. “Is that why they suffered? Not at all! And you will perish, too, unless you repent of your sins and turn to God. And what about the eighteen people who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them? Were they the worst sinners in Jerusalem? No, and I tell you again that unless you repent, you will perish, too.”

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.’”

One Sabbath day as Jesus was teaching in a synagogue, he saw a woman who had been crippled by an evil spirit. She had been bent double for eighteen years and was unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, “Dear woman, you are healed of your sickness!” Then he touched her, and instantly she could stand straight. How she praised God!

But the leader in charge of the synagogue was indignant that Jesus had healed her on the Sabbath day. “There are six days of the week for working,” he said to the crowd. “Come on those days to be healed, not on the Sabbath.” But the Lord replied, “You hypocrites! Each of you works on the Sabbath day! Don’t you untie your ox or your donkey from its stall on the Sabbath and lead it out for water? This dear woman, a daughter of Abraham, has been held in bondage by Satan for eighteen years. Isn’t it right that she be released, even on the Sabbath?”

This shamed his enemies, but all the people rejoiced at the wonderful things he did. (Luke 13:1-17 NLT)

Reflection & Discussion

Conversation #1

1. The temperature is hot in this exchange. What is the political context and what are the reporters trying to do?
2. What’s Jesus’ approach to these reports? Why is it hazardous to his health?

Conversation #2

1. Jesus launches into a story about trees and gardens. What’s this got to do with the previous conversation?
2. Who in the audience needs the manure in this story? Why?

Conversation #3

1. What does this story tell us about Jesus?
 2. What does this story tell us about the woman?
 3. What does this story tell us about spiritual leadership?
 4. What’s got us tied up and from which we need releasing to serve and care for our world?
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A Prayer to Begin and End our Time Together

*Come, Holy Spirit,
enlighten my mind, cleanse my motives,
clarify my intentions and guide my ambitions.
When full understanding is not possible,
give me faith to trust in you anyway.
When my questions are greater than my answers,
give me faith to trust in you anyway.
When my doubts outweigh my certainties,
give me faith to trust in you anyway.
I offer this request in the name of the One who makes possible
the answer to this prayer.... In the name of Jesus.*



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