Ready Hearts in an Upside-Down Kingdom

1. Read Luke 13:1-5. In our text today, Jesus references a local disaster in which a tower fell and killed eighteen people. It was a terrible and shocking event, and I'm sure everyone was asking, Why? Why did this happen? In that day, many people believed that if something bad happened to you, it must mean God was punishing you for some sin you had committed. But Jesus dismisses that faulty theology. We should not blame God for every bad thing that happens, because bad things happen simply because we live in a sinful, broken world. It really is that simple.

   Just as driving a broken car, flying in a broken plane, or living in a house with faulty wiring increases the likelihood of disaster, so too this world is broken, and we should not be surprised when bad things happen. But what is the most dangerous broken thing of all, the thing that causes harm to us and to others?

   We are broken. Our flesh. Our will. Our bodies, our minds, our souls. Sin breaks everything! Thus, ultimately, sin is to blame for all brokenness and all bad things.

2. Ultimately, then, sin is to blame for all brokenness and all evil. A holy God could choose to judge that sin and brokenness immediately—He could push towers down on people, and we would deserve it, for "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). But He does not. He is in the business of saving sinful mankind; that is why He sent His Son.

   Still, one day we will all stand before God in His holiness and give an account. We do not know when that day will come. Any day could be our last. A tower could fall on you tomorrow. That is Jesus' point. And what does this mean for us?

   It means we must repent. You never know when you will be called to stand before Almighty God. One day every sinner who has ever lived will stand in divine judgment before the throne of the holy God on the Last Day, and no one will escape. So the warning is clear: Repent before it is too late. It's also important to remember that right before this—after having warned against hypocrisy, covetousness and worry—Jesus says in Luke 12:57-59, that we should make every effort to make peace with others in this world and more importantly with God, who is the ultimate judge and can throw us into hell. And thinking that God's wrath is only meted out in petty ways like knocking over towers on people is just foolish. Even sins that we don't always think are a big deal, like hypocrisy, covetousness and worry, are nonetheless, ways that we show that we'd rather not trust God above all things.

3. Read Luke 13:6-9. In Jesus' parable, the owner is ready to cut the tree down. It is taking up space and producing nothing. But the vinedresser is not ready to give up. "One more year," he pleads. One more chance.

And then the story ends. There is no resolution. No answer. No neat conclusion. Like a cliffhanger, Jesus leaves us asking: Does the tree finally bear fruit? Does the owner grant more time? Or does the ax fall? Jesus does not say—and that is precisely the point.

The silence of the ending places the weight of the story on us. The unanswered question is not really about the tree, but about our lives. Will we remain barren, presuming on God's patience? Or will we repent while there is still time?

Lukes Gospel returns to this theme again and again: the danger of unfruitfulness in those who claim to belong to God. John the Baptist warned, "Bear fruits in keeping with repentance" (Luke 3:8). Jesus taught that a tree is known by its fruit: good trees bear good fruit, and bad trees bear bad fruit (Luke 6:43–45). In the parable of the sower, only the good soil receives the word and bears a fruitful harvest (Luke 8:5–15).

So, the message is clear: God's patience is real, but it is not endless. His kindness is meant to lead us to repentance, not complacency. And the question this parable seem to press upon us is not whether the tree had another year, but whether our lives are bearing the fruit of genuine repentance now. So how do we examine our lives to see if we are producing spiritual fruit?

As John the Baptist said, "Bear fruit in keeping with repentance." True repentance is more than feeling sorry. It is more than guilt, regret, or sadness over sin. True repentance means seeing ourselves honestly before God. It means admitting that we are sinners, that we are broken, and that we cannot save ourselves. It means letting go of our pride and giving up the idea that we can make ourselves good enough for God.

And that is why we need Jesus. On our own, we could never stand before a holy God. But in Christ, we can. In Christ, we are forgiven. In Christ, we are safe. Apart from Him, we remain sinful, broken, and under condemnation. This is the heart of repentance and faith. Repentance is recognizing our deep need for Jesus. Faith is trusting that God's love, mercy, and grace are given to us through Jesus Christ alone.

Now faith is not something you can easily measure. Jesus says that faith the size of a mustard seed is enough. Why? Because what matters most is not the amount of your faith, but the object of your faith. Our faith is in Christ. And even weak faith in a strong Savior is enough to save.

But while faith itself cannot be measured, fruit can. A living faith produces visible fruit. Faith is never alone. It shows itself in a changed life. It begins to produce love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

So the real question is not simply, "Do I say that I believe?" The real question is: "Is my faith bearing fruit?"

4. In Luke 13:10–17, what contrast do we see between Satan and the Holy Spirit, and how does Jesus' healing of the woman show His power to free people both physically and spiritually especially in relation to the Sabbath?

   In Luke 13:12 Jesus tells the woman, "Woman, you are released from your weakness," and in 13:16 Jesus explains that Satan had bound her for eighteen years. This shows that Satan's work is to bind, weaken, and enslave. In contrast, Luke 1:41-44, Luke 1:67, Luke 2:25-26, Luke 11:13 all connect the Holy Spirit with power—power in the Holy Spirit's work to lead the fetus John, his mother, Elizabeth, Simeon, and all believers through prayer for the Spirit, to confess faith in Christ. The woman's condition therefore becomes more than a physical problem; it points to the larger reality that sin and Satan bind people both outwardly and inwardly. Jesus came to set people free from all that holds them captive. After He healed her, "she stood up straight and praised God" (13:13), which can be described as worship—the fitting response to God's gracious deliverance. This happens on the Sabbath as a sign that it is the sole purpose of the Church's work and gathering—to receive from God, through His Word and the work of the Holy Spirit, to be freed from the guilt and death brought by sin and live in Christ.

5. Why was Jesus right to correct the synagogue leader for objecting to the healing on the Sabbath, and how does this miracle connect to the Old Testament religious calendar? For reference, see Lev 25:8-55.

   Jesus was right to rebuke the synagogue leader because the leader cared more about religious rules than about a suffering person being set free. In this story, the leader complains that healing should happen on another day because the Sabbath was supposed to be a day of rest. But Jesus shows that doing good and freeing someone from suffering is not a misuse of the Sabbath—it is exactly the kind of thing the Sabbath points to.

   Jesus exposes the leader's inconsistency by noting that people were willing to help their animals on the Sabbath, yet this woman—someone precious to God—was being denied mercy. His point is that if compassion can be shown to animals, how much more should it be shown to a person who has suffered for eighteen years.

   To understand the deeper meaning, it helps to know that in the Bible the Sabbath was not only about stopping work. It was also meant to reflect God's desire to bring rest, freedom, and restoration. The Old Testament even describes special times when debts were canceled, slaves were freed, and families were restored to what they had lost—for example, the year of Jubilee. These practices taught that God wants His people to live in freedom under His care.

   So when Jesus heals this woman on the Sabbath, He is showing the true heart of God. The Sabbath is not mainly about protecting a rule; it is about God bringing relief and wholeness. Jesus' healing shows that He came to set people free and restore them to the life God intends.

   See detailed structure. The two parables are parallel in structure. Both begin with an introductory question by Jesus. Both contrast the small beginning of the kingdom with its grand scope at the end of the age.

6. Read Luke 13:18-21. Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a mustard seed and yeast. How do these parables show that God's kingdom may begin small, hidden, and humble, yet grows over time by God's mysterious power through simple means? And how does this contrast with the "yeast" of

the Pharisees—hypocrisy and unbelief—which keeps people from recognizing Jesus and being ready for God's coming kingdom?

These parables teach that the kingdom of God often begins in ways people do not expect. A mustard seed is tiny, and yeast is hidden in dough, yet both produce results far greater than their small beginnings suggest. In the same way, God's kingdom came in the humble person and work of Jesus, not with outward greatness or immediate political power. Its growth may seem slow or unnoticed, but it is real, powerful, and certain because God himself brings it about.

They also show that God works through ordinary means. Jesus preached, taught, healed, died, and rose again, and through that message the kingdom spreads from heart to heart and from place to place. Like yeast working through the whole lump of dough, the gospel quietly but thoroughly changes people and communities over time.

This stands in sharp contrast to the "yeast" of the Pharisees, which Jesus uses as a warning. Their yeast represents hypocrisy, pride, unbelief, and false teaching. Instead of receiving the kingdom, they resisted Jesus and focused on outward religion while their hearts remained hard. Their influence also spread, but in a harmful way, blinding people to who Jesus really is and keeping them unprepared for God's kingdom.

So the contrast is clear: God's kingdom may appear small and hidden, but it grows by God's power and brings life. The yeast of the Pharisees also spreads, but it corrupts, deceives, and prevents people from recognizing the King. The parables call us not to despise small beginnings, but to trust God's quiet work and to guard our hearts against unbelief and hypocrisy.

7. Read Luke 13:22-30. In Luke 13:24, what does Jesus mean when He says, "Strive to enter by the narrow door," and how does that connect to Noah's ark and the way people often live today?

Jesus means that entering God's kingdom is urgent, costly, and not something to be treated as secondary. In the days of Noah, people went on with ordinary life—eating, drinking, marrying, and carrying on as if God's warning did not matter. The ark stood before them as God's one appointed way of rescue, yet many must have treated it as unnecessary, extreme, or easy to put off until later. But when the flood came and God shut the door, it was too late.

Jesus says the same is true spiritually. He is the narrow door—the only way into salvation, mercy, and life. To "strive" means we must not drift through life acting as if Christ is just an addition to our plans, a religious interest, or something to deal with later. Many people today are busy with work, family, success, and daily routines, assuming they can keep Jesus at the edges of life. But Christ does not call us to fit Him into an already full life; He calls us to enter through Him as our only hope. The door is open now, but it will not remain open forever.

The ark's door stood open for a long time, but eventually it was shut. That is the warning of Luke 13 as well: a time will come when the door is closed, and those outside will not be able to enter. So the urgency is real. Christ's mercy is open now, but no one should assume that opportunity lasts forever. The sermon's point is that judgment is real, mercy is real, and people must come to Christ now rather than delay until it is too late.

For those who have entered through the Door, life is not only about being ready for the last day; it is also about receiving abundant life now. Jesus the Door leads His people into safety, provision, rest, and pasture. Believers therefore live with peace instead of panic, generosity instead of scarcity, endurance in suffering instead of despair, and boldness in ordinary obedience. Because they are secure in the Shepherd, they can keep praying, serving, loving, repenting, and caring for others. In Luke 13 terms, those who enter the narrow door do not merely escape judgment; they belong in the kingdom and begin to live as kingdom people now.

8. What does life look like for those who have entered through the Door?

The sermon says that entering through Christ does not only prepare us for the last day; it gives us abundant life now. Jesus the Door leads His people into safety, provision, rest, and pasture. That means believers live with peace instead of panic, generosity instead of scarcity, endurance in suffering instead of despair, and boldness in ordinary obedience. Because they are secure in the Shepherd, they can keep praying, serving, loving, repenting, and caring for others. In Luke 13 terms, those who enter the narrow door do not merely escape judgment; they belong in the kingdom and begin to live as kingdom people now.

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