

Does God Cause Bad Things to Happen to Bad People?

Luke 13:1-9

Someone asked if I am doing Ok. They said I didn't look like it. I have been watching myself on video. This week I thought, "I look serious almost all the time. I need to smile more." I am doing well. I might not look like it, but I am doing fine. I'll try to smile more this week. Times are difficult for many people. I'm trying to address people experiencing fear and anxiety. A lot of people are under stress. This is dragging out longer than we want it to – but there is a lot of good going on, too.

Your response to help the food pantry has been great. We delivered food this week that was needed. Your giving has been strong for the month of April. We are in a good position financially. Members that are facing difficult times are handling things with grace and a sense of humor.

I am still asked why this happened. Why did God allow this? What is God trying to teach us? Is God punishing America? Are evil people behind this event? Is God punishing people for their sin? **Jesus addressed the same kinds of questions in Luke 13:**

1. Does God cause bad things to happen to bad people?

Luke 13:1-3 Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. ² And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

We easily categorize people as good or bad. Good people do things we approve. Bad people do bad things in our eyes. We think God should make good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. This line of thinking was common in Jesus' day.

Apparently some Jewish people went to worship and were killed. We don't know when this happened. It is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible.

Jesus didn't say these Galilean worshippers were innocent. The Bible says none are righteous, no not one. **Jesus' point was that they were not more guilty than others.** These worshippers were not punished for their guilt, but they were not protected because they were going to worship. Jesus was saying that everyone is guilty and everyone is going to die so you better do something about your guilt before you die. These worshippers did not know they were going to die that day. They did not expect to die going to make a sacrifice.

Bad things happen. Bad things happen to all of us.

In America, we tend to have it better than most.

We want our life to always be smooth sailing, but storms are a part of life.

Are you ready for the storm? Storms often come without warning so you have to be ready for the storm before the storm hits.

You need insurance before the tree falls on your house.

You need an emergency fund before the refrigerator goes out.
You need to commit to Jesus before you die.
It is appointed unto man once to die, and then the judgment.

Jesus not only said you never know when bad things might happen, but you never know when you are going to die – so you need to repent. You need to be ready.

Luke 13:3 *I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.*

2. Does God judge individuals through natural disasters?

Luke 13:4-5 *Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."*

A tower in Siloam fell and killed 18 people. Jesus asked if those people were worse than others. The answer is no. Have people who died from Covid-19 been worse than the ones who lived? I cannot explain why some people die from the coronavirus and others don't. Some doctors and nurses that sacrificially served others have died from the virus. That doesn't seem fair.

Jesus did not rail against the random nature of death from natural disasters. Jesus did not try to explain it either. God didn't explain it to Job. Life is not fair from our perspective. Jesus implied that you don't know when you will die in this crazy world, you better be ready, and the time to get ready is now.

Some people die from the virus and others survive. Some people died in the recent tornados, but many survived. I can't explain it. But don't let the bad things that happen blind you to the mercy of God every single day.

Matthew 5:45 *... for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

God sends sunshine and rain to all people, the good and evil, those that love him and those that do not. What does this mean? C.H. Spurgeon explained it this way:

"This is the day of ... mercy. The hour of judgment is not yet, when He will separate between the good and the bad; when He will mount the judgment seat and award different portions to the righteous and the wicked."

Even though bad things happen in the world, there are good things that happen, too. God is still showing mercy. God still offers grace and a chance for sin to be forgiven every day to every one.

In this time of stress and strain and the unknown we must see the goodness of God around us. In this time of uncertainty and unrest, we can still see the hand of God at work.

Jesus told a parable to teach that God is good to us and He expects fruit from us.

3. God expects fruit – He gives us help and time to produce.

Luke 13:6 *And He began telling this parable: “A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any.*

In Luke 13, Jesus is warning everyone about the coming judgment of God. Jesus begins the parable by saying that God is looking for fruit. **The fruit of our life reveals what kind of person we really are. Are you producing fruit that demonstrates you are rightly related to God?**

John 15:4-5 *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. ⁵I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.*

If we are following Christ and surrendered to Him then we should bear fruit. If we are not bearing fruit, it is a sign that something is wrong. In the parable, the man planted a fig tree and he came looking for fruit and did not find any. Look what happens next.

Luke 13:7 *And he said to the vineyard-keeper, ‘Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?’*

The owner wanted to cut down the tree! He had been expecting fruit for three years, when there was no fruit, the owner wanted to cut it down. He said it was wasting space. The tree had been taking and taking and taking from the garden, but it had given nothing in return. A life that only takes will not bear fruit and it will not survive. Are you selfish? Are you self-centered – focused only on yourself and what you want? This fig tree was alive. It was growing. It had branches and leaves. It was taking nutrients from the ground and spending it all on itself. It was producing no fruit to give to someone else. God judges selfish lives.

Your life is not always going to be bearing evident fruit. The owner showed patience. The owner demonstrated mercy. The owner didn’t expect fruit the day after he planted the tree. The farmer took into account dry spells, and winter, but after three years he expected some fruit.

God is merciful. God is giving you time. What are you doing with the time God has given you? Is your life bearing any fruit? Have you served anyone in Jesus’ name? Has anyone moved closer to God because of you? Have you shared the gospel? What are you doing with your time? If you are spending all of God’s resources on yourself, God is not pleased. But you have a chance to make things right. You can repent. You can change. You can bear fruit!

Notice the mercy of God extended:

Luke 13:8 *And he answered and said to him, ‘Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer;*

The vinedresser would do everything possible to help the fig tree produce fruit. He asked for another year. He said he would dig around it and put in fertilizer. What does that mean?

The vinedresser is going to stir things up. He is going to add fertilizer – which is a fancy name for manure. If you are not bearing any fruit, you are inviting God to shake things up in your life.

God may dig up some things in your life, and God may dump a load of manure into your life, too. We never like it when we get manure dumped into our lives. I only heard my Dad cuss twice. Once was at a horse, the other was the time he got a load of chicken manure. He went to the chicken plant down the road from our house. He pulled in and asked for some manure. The man said, "Sure, we are cleaning out a chicken house right now!" The man motioned to a worker driving a front-end loader. He went and scooped up a load of fresh manure, drove over and dumped it into the back of my Dad's truck. Then the man at the plant said, "You probably wanted dried manure." But it was too late – the truck was full. My Dad had to drive home and unload that manure with a shovel. It had the consistency of a sticky pudding and it stunk. I pulled into the driveway as my Dad was scraping the last bit out of the truck. I said, "Dad, did you get some chicken manure?" He said, "Son, this is not manure. This is chicken"

My Dad had to be careful how he used that fresh manure because it was so powerful, but his garden produced a lot more that year than any year before. He started giving away produce. Having things stirred up and dumping manure is not pleasant, but it gets results!

Is God stirring up your life right now? Do you feel like you have had a load of fresh manure dumped into your life? God may be at work trying to help you stop focusing on yourself and start producing fruit that will bless others. You better wake up and get ready while you have a chance.

Luke 13:9 *and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.*"

There is a day of judgment coming. God gives you warnings and chances and second chances, but there is a final chance. Jesus' point in the first part of this passage is that you never know when you have just received your final chance. Are you ready to face God?

The parable reminds us that we are to bear fruit. Let's look back at John 15 for one more thought as we close:

John 15:1-2 *I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.*

You may be bearing fruit, but God may want to prune some things from your life because He knows you could bear more fruit. Pruning does not feel good. It means a cutting away of some potentially good branches. Let God work in your heart. He knows what He is doing. It is for your good and His. God works in the lives of His children because He loves them. Don't resent the work of God in your life even if it involves pruning and fertilizer.

If you don't know Christ, you can surrender to Him today. Repent means to turn away from a selfish life and commit to following Jesus.