



New Year's Eve 2013 "A Reprieve for Repentance" (Luke 13:1-8)

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I loved the message Josh Harris shared over the weekend, I thought it was very prophetic. We should not focus on the Jesus movement of the past, but rather on the move of Jesus now and in the future. He is moving. I wonder what Jesus is going to do in people's lives in 2014? We need to be praying as never before.

For some, 2014 will be a year of OPPORTUNITY.

Joshua 3 – Going in to the Promised Land in 2013

- Get your feet wet
- Ignore the flood waters
- Realize there are battles to fight in The Promised Land
- Don't touch the devoted things

For others, 2014 will be a year of TESTING.

- 2014 will bring with it things in life that will test our faith. It may be sickness, personal loss, perplexing situations where you do not understand what God is up to. May the Lord grant us faith to endure the test. It is meant to mature us, not defeat us.

For some, 2014 will be the year of DEATH.

- Apart from a miracle, my friend Ed Norman will not endure on the earth through the year 2014. Ed knows his time has come. What a blessing. He has had time to prepare. He has planned his whole funeral, of which I have the privilege of helping to officiate, unless of course I die before then. Death for some will come without warning, they will not have time to prepare. That is why we need to prepare daily.

Read Luke 18:1-8; In the past few months, I have taken the time to read through all of my prayer journals. One of the things I noticed is that some people I used to pray for regularly (daily for years), I stopped praying for, at least as regularly as I once did. So I have begun to pray for them again. And I have been encouraged to finally see some fruit from those

prayers. I am certain that the fruit is not because I have started praying for them again, even though those most recent prayers are certainly effective, but rather because I prayed consistently for years. And what I realized as I look back is that as I prayed for people, God moved in ways I did not always recognize. There is a parable Jesus told that helped me greatly in understanding just what was happening. Read Luke 13:1-8. See also Matt. 3:1-10.

For some, 2014 will be a year of FERTILIZATION. And it will come as a direct result of our intercession on their behalf. The fertilizing in their lives is intended to lead them to repentance. And to repent is the most important thing anyone can do. See II Cor.7:10; II Peter 3:9.

The main point of Luke 13:1-8 is that ultimately it's not how one dies, but rather how one lives. This is what makes the eternal difference.

My friend Ed Norman is dying of a cancerous tumor, but years ago Ed repented, and received Christ as his Savior. Eddie Dobson was dean of students at Liberty University when I was a student there, and he is dying of Lou Gehrig's disease, but Eddie Dobson is headed for glory. He repented and received Christ as Savior.

There was this belief among the Jews that if calamity came upon one's life, it must be the result of sin. That's why Job's friends accused him of sin that he needed to confess. They believed the reason behind the plagues God allowed Satan to bring upon Job was the result of something Job had done. But this simply was not true. Repeatedly God says in the opening pages of Job's story that he was "blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

There is sometimes great mystery in the suffering and means of death for certain of God's saints. Hebrews 11 tells us that some saints in history were stoned, sawed in two, tortured, imprisoned, were destitute, persecuted, mistreated. But once again, it is not how they died but how they lived that determined their eternal destiny. Was there evidence in their lives that they had repented? That is the eternal issue.

This fig tree is about to be cut down (death). But it ends up receiving a gracious reprieve - one more year to have a chance to produce fruit, the fruit of repentance. And what was going to happen during that year? Digging, and fertilizer...now that stinks!

This was the revelation God brought to my mind regarding people I had been praying for – God was digging, God was fertilizing, and I did not recognize that it was a direct result of my prayers!

A few thoughts:

1. My grandmother putting horse manure on a little fig tree behind our house. In a very short amount of time, that fig tree was huge, and producing abundant fruit. My mother and grandmother made fig preserves for years! That fig tree grew so large I could climb up it and get on the roof of the storage shed it stood next to!
2. The digging around the fig tree to fertilize it?

- The digging around the tree suggests that the work needed must go beyond the surface. It must be a work that goes down deep. The root must be affected, or else change would be hopeless (see Ezek.18:30-32). The root of our problem is sin (James 1; II Peter 1:4b). King David could have tried to blame Bathsheba for his sin. She was bathing in open view of the king's balcony. Yet when David confessed his sin, here's what he said: Psalm 51: 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...

- King Saul made excuses for his sin (See I Sam.15:13-15, 19-23). When he did finally confess, he was not repentant. His heart was not changed.

- Balaam confessed his sin, but there was no real heart change, nothing happened at the root, and he ended up continuing his reckless path, and ultimately it cost him his life.

- Even Judas confessed after betraying Jesus, but he never repented.

3. What kind of fertilizer does God use?

- Note: Some of the very things God allows in a fruit bearing tree in order to produce maturity/more fruit are the same things he uses to fertilize the fruitless tree.

- Financial troubles; Haggai 1:3-11; Opposition brought about a temporary setback that became a lifestyle. See notes on Haggai to expound on what exactly happened...

- Physical infirmity; I Cor.11:30-32; Psalm 38: 7 My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body. 8 I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart.

- Calamity/personal tragedy; Amos 4:10-11

- A jackass (Balaam's donkey; your car)

- Psalm 119: 67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word.

4. The time granted to the fig tree

- Underserved (grace)

- Unknown to the fig tree

- Limited

- Granted as a result of someone's intercession

CONCLUSION

- What has this year been like for you? Any fertilization in your life? What if last year was the year that God gave you a chance to repent? How much ***time*** do you have left?
- Take a moment to pray for someone who needs to repent, and ask the Lord to help us to remember when He begins to answer our prayer by digging and fertilizing in their lives.