

## ***Make Sure You Are Producing Good***

Luke 13:1-9 (March 20, 2022)

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<sup>1</sup>At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. <sup>2</sup>He asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? <sup>3</sup>No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. <sup>4</sup>Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? <sup>5</sup>No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”

<sup>6</sup>Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. <sup>7</sup>So he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ <sup>8</sup>He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. <sup>9</sup>If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

### ***Historical Context***

The event that sparks Jesus’ response is Governor Pilate’s execution of Galileans during some ritual practice. Such an event could have personally affected Jesus on multiple levels. First, he was a Galilean, which means that this violence impacted people from his neighborhood, people whom he could have known and grown up with. Second, Pilate was a direct appointee of the Roman empire who epitomized the fear-inducing brutality that Roman provincial subjects, like Jesus, daily experienced. Third, the notion that Pilate mingled the Galileans blood with sacrifices insinuates that Pilate violated the Galileans ritual practice.

### ***Theme: Make Sure You Are Producing Good***

Jesus reminds the audience that bad events occur that are not the result of human iniquity or divine penalty. The Galileans were victims of a surprising, unforeseen disaster. Jesus uses these unpredictable, unchangeable incidents to prompt his audience to change what they can—their minds. Jesus tells them to repent (metanoēō)—to change their mind about their current commitments to injustice and unrighteousness. Changing one’s mind in this way leads to a change in conduct. Jesus invites the audience to adjust their current course and return to God.

Jesus is not suggesting that repentance will prevent them from a physical, catastrophic death. Rather, he is stating that changing their minds will prepare them for whatever they will experience, including producing fruit. To illustrate his point, Jesus turns to a parable about a fig tree that has not produced fruit in three years

Jesus’ message is clear: do not be like the fruitless tree. Rather than focus on the gravity of others’ transgressions, make sure you are producing good. Instead of assigning causality to others’ misfortune, ensure that you are not ignoring your own missing fruit. Jesus’ words suggest that tending to one’s own life and positively changing one’s own mind is the best strategy to prevent or even persevere through unexpected calamity. If one refuses to do that type of work, they are already ruined.