

He Came Seeking Fruit

Luke: All Things New



Series Goal

That Mercy Hill Church would be made new as we follow the One who is making all things new!



Sermon Text

Luke 13:6-17



Big Idea

If we want to become the kind of trees that bear good fruit in love for God and neighbor, then we must tumble towards the only fruitful One and abide in His love, drawing on His grace and Spirit.

In the synagogue scene, what we have is the picture painted by the parable playing out in time and space. The principles that the parable sets forth are here fleshed out in reality. The two sections of our text really work together to give us a better understanding of the whole.

(1) The Necessity of It

In our parable, everything turns on the this idea of fruit. If the tree produces fruit, it can stay and is blessed. If it doesn't, cut it down.

"A fundamental mistake of the conservative side of much of the Western church is that its basic goal is to get people into heaven rather than to get heaven into people. This creates groups of people who may be ready to die but clearly are not ready to live. They rarely can get along with one another, much less with those 'outside.' Often their most intimate relations are tangles of reciprocal harm, coldness, resentment and righteous meanness. They have become 'Christian' without [becoming] Christlike" (Dallas Willard, The Cost of Non-Discipleship).

Grace is not opposed to law. It fulfills it. Grace is not opposed to fruit. It produces it! You know you've encountered God's grace when you are producing good fruit.

(2) The Essence of It

What is the essence of this fruit, if it's not all this religious stuff? Well, I think if we look carefully we shall see that it is love—love for God and neighbor. And this certainly makes sense for Jesus Himself would say elsewhere that: "On these two . . . depend all the Law and the Prophets" (Matt 22:40). It's what everything has been about. It's what God has been looking for all along. And yet these men in the synagogue have missed it. They have a lot of leaves . . . but no real fruit.

(3) The Production of It

Legalism says, "I can produce it." It looks at the law and says, "I can fulfill it." It sounds good, perhaps, but the only problem is: It never works. In fact, it always makes us worse. When we approach sanctification or fruit-bearing in our own strength we will never escape the labyrinth of our sinfulness, but only wander deeper in. The image in my mind here is when Hercules was trying to slay the Hydra. For every head he cut off, two more would grow back in its place. Trying to fight sin on our own is like that. The only way to slay the Hydra of our sin, so to speak, is to deal with it at the roots, at the heart level. And only Jesus can get there.

Reflection Questions



- Read the quote by Dallas Willard above one more time. Do you agree with it? What stands out to you? In what ways do you think you've been influenced by the mistaken teaching he identifies? What needs to change?
- Have you ever been a tree with a lot of leaves but no fruit? Have you ever been active in religious duties but lacking in love? How are you tempted to such things even now?
- In what way have you experienced the "Hydra effect" when trying to fight sin and bear fruit in your own strength? Read Romans 7:4-6 again. What does this mean for the production of fruit in your own life? Read John 15:5 again. What do you think it means to abide?