

## One More Year

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*“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” (Luke 13:1-9).*

### 1. Your Favorite Parable in the Gospels

There are many parables in the four Gospels. Which one is your favorite parable? My favorite parable is “The Parable of the Prodigal Son.” I am not sure whether the title of the parable is correct because the focus of the parable is not the son but the father. Therefore, some call this parable “The Parable of the Forgiving Father.” I would like to call the parable, “the Parable of the Waiting Father.” Luke 15:20 says, “**while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.**”

When his younger son is still a long way off, the father notices him and feels sorry for him. The father must have been watching for the return of his son since his son left home. He probably waited every day for his son to see his son’s return.

### 2. The Two Stories and a Parable

Luke 15:1 and the following tells us that God is waiting for the return of Israel. Jesus brings up two instances to illustrate the point. First, some Galileans were killed by Pilate while they were offering sacrifices. Second, 18 innocent bystanders in Siloam were killed when a tower fell on them. Jesus asks about the people that are killed, “**Do you think that they were worse than all the others?**” The answer is “absolutely not.” These people were likely just like anyone else.

Then Jesus says, ***“unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”*** Jesus reminds the people of Israel that God is waiting for the repentance of everyone, both the extreme examples and the everyday person.

In verses 6-9, Jesus illustrates his point in the parable of the barren fig tree. Jesus says, ***“A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. 7 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?’”***

In ancient Palestine, it was customary to plant fig trees and other trees in vineyards. This was to utilize every available spot of good ground. The fig tree was an image of Israel. The owner of the vineyard is God. When the owner comes to look for fruit on the fig tree, he finds none. The owner is disappointed and asks the gardener to cut the fig tree down. He does not want to waste the soil.

The gardener replies, ***“Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.”***

The gardener asks for more time in the hope that more cultivation and fertilizer might lead to fruit. Who is the gardener? The gardener likely refers to Jesus. The gardener says he is willing to bestow additional labor on Israel so that Israel bears fruit. The parable does not tell us what the owner says, but the owner seems to be willing to wait one more year.

### **3. Fruitful Life**

What is the meaning of fruit in this parable? If the fig tree refers to Israel, we need to ask what fruit is God expecting from Israel? Genesis 12:1-2 says, ***“Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.”***

One day, God appears to Abram in his town of Haran. God asks Abram to go to a new land where God would show him. God promises to make Abram’s descendants a great nation and that Abram would be a blessing. Abram trusts the Lord and follows God’s direction.

What does the term “being a blessing” mean? In Galatians 3:9, Paul says, ***“so those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.”***

Paul points out that not by keeping the law but by faith all believers can be God's people and share Abram's blessing. We learned from Abram who we are and how we are supposed to live. We are blessed by God and repeat the same act of blessing onto others.

We are like trees that bear fruits. Who enjoys fruits? Fruits are not consumed by the trees, but by humans. If we bear fruits and are blessed by God, others should take advantage of our fruits.

Are people around us fed, clothed, and encouraged through us? Do those around us have hope or experience God's love from us? We need to ask ourselves each day, who needs our help?

#### **4. How to Be a Blessing**

About 3 million people have fled the Ukraine since the start of the Russian invasion. Most of these people are women and children. Many have been arriving in Poland with nowhere to stay and nothing to eat. The number of refugees in Warsaw, Poland is currently about 1.8 million. This number is equal to the population of Warsaw, Poland's capital, and largest city.

We are happy to hear that people in Poland are very supportive of Ukraine refugees. The EU has assigned 500 million euros (\$547 million) for humanitarian aid to Ukraine. The U.S. government, the United Methodist Committee on Relief, many other organizations, and people are sending support. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to share our blessing with the Ukrainians. When we share our blessing with others, God is happy and blesses us as well.

#### **5. One More Year**

A year ago, one of our neighbors passed away. He was a cancer patient. A few weeks before his passing, I visited and talked with him. He was grateful for the care of our congregation. There were a few people who visited him often. We prayed together and were looking to meet again sometime soon. We didn't know that that would be the last time we would see each other. I was grateful that I was able to visit and spend time with him.

Many people have been killed in Ukraine. Many have passed from the pandemic. We don't know what will happen to us tomorrow. But we know that each of us is placed on this earth to be a blessing and to share the blessing with others.

#### **6. Conclusion**

The parable of the barren fig tree is often treated as a parable about repentance. The owner of the vineyard is disappointed with the fruitless fig tree and orders the gardener to get rid of it. But the gardener asks a favor of giving the tree one more year. He asks the owner to give the fig tree a second chance. He promises that he would water the tree, fertilize it, and watch it grow. The gardener believes the fig tree will be fruitful next year.

Have you ever thought that God is doing the same thing for us? Are we grateful to the Lord for giving us one more year?

## **7. Application**

This morning, we are blessed to see Carol Peters baptized. I am grateful to Debbie for inviting her to church and to Julia and Ruth for teaching about Jesus and the meaning of baptism. We know that Carol will be a blessing to others. Someone will come to Christ through her.

Sharing and showing others the love of Christ is one way to be a blessing to others. From the youngest Sunday school child to the older member of church, each of us can reach out to those around us and be a blessing.

As we share God's blessing with others, we may not see progress in others, in our community and even in ourselves. Today's parable reminds us that God is patient and waiting for us to be more fruitful. We need to do the same. We need to continue to sow forgiveness, patience, compassion, and love to others as the Lord is waiting for us. Thanks be to the Lord for giving us one more year. Amen.