

**My Journey to Easter
Through Repentance
Luke 13:1-9**

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Dr. Steve Horn

Text Introduction: For a couple of weeks now, we have tried to prepare ourselves for Easter around this theme of “My Journey to Easter.” Two weeks ago, we shared together the Lord’s Supper as a way to look at Easter. Last week, we attempted to look at Easter through the lens of baptism. Today, I want to share with you about the word “repentance.”

Text: At that time, some people came and reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. ²And He responded to them, “Do you think that these Galileans were more sinful than all Galileans because they suffered these things? ³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as well! ⁴Or those 18 that the tower in Siloam fell on and killed—do you think they were more sinful than all the people who live in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as well!”

⁶And He told this parable: “A man had a fig tree that was planted in his vineyard. He came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷He told the vineyard worker, ‘Listen, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it even waste the soil?’

⁸“But he replied to him, ‘Sir, leave it this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹Perhaps it will bear fruit next year, but if not, you can cut it down.’”

Introduction: This particular passage before us today is particular to Luke—meaning not in the other Gospels. The two incidents mentioned in verses 1-5 are not elsewhere mentioned in Scripture so we cannot be sure of the exact events, but no doubt Jesus’ audience knew of them. The point of their question was to understand from Jesus if these people had committed some grave sin to bring about their calamity. Every generation seems to want to understand that question. It came up with Katrina you might remember. However, Jesus’ answer and the subsequent parable indicates that their question is not even the one they should be asking. The more important matter is their own personal repentance.

Repentance is not a real popular subject because it forces us to think upon our sin. However, repentance is the very heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Darrell Bock said, “To remove accountability to God for sin is to remove one of the realities that make grace so powerful. In the effort to make the gospel palatable, we risk emasculating it of its most precious truth, that God has paid the debt for our failure and has washed it white as snow. Ironically in trying to exalt God’s love by ignoring sin, we remove the most powerful evidence of its (God’s love)presence. – Darrell L. Bock, NIV Application Commentary on this passage, 370.

So, let’s talk about repentance? First, let’s be sure we understand what repentance is.

Definition of Repentance—literally speaking “to have a change”

Repentance literally means to turn to have a change. “To repent is to agree that a change is required, and then to respond accordingly.”—Darrell L. Bock’s definition.

Jesus’ parable of the two sons appropriately illustrates repentance.

Matthew 21:28-31-- “But what do you think? A man had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘My son, go, work in the vineyard today.’

²⁹ “He answered, ‘I don’t want to!’ Yet later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ Then the man went to the other and said the same thing.

“‘I will, sir,’ he answered. But he didn’t go.

³¹ “Which of the two did his father’s will?”

“The first,” they said.

What is repentance? Is it defined by the first son who had a change and did the right thing or by the son who had said he would go, but did not? The answer is a simple one.

It is not my intent to just define, but to apply the word repentance to our lives, and to show us by God’s word how extremely valuable the word is.

Repentance is absolutely essential for salvation. “Everyone must repent.” The people that Jesus addressed in Luke 13 were thinking that great sins caused bad things to happen. Jesus responds by saying all must repent.

Repentance is the heart of John the Baptist’s message—Mark 1:15

- The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe in the good news!”

Repentance is the heart of Jesus’ message= Repent or perish—Luke 13:5, Matthew 4:17

- No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as well!”
- From then on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!”

Repentance is the message of the resurrection—Acts 2:38, 3:19

- “Repent,” Peter said to them, “and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out, that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

Repentance is the message of Paul—Acts 26:20, 17:30

- Instead, I preached to those in Damascus first, and to those in Jerusalem and in all the region of Judea, and to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works worthy of repentance.
- Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now commands all people everywhere to repent,

Repentance is the consistent message of the Bible. Repentance is absolutely essential for salvation. Some might say that this sounds contradictory to grace. No, it is consistent with grace because only by

God's grace can we be delivered from sin, which is at the very heart of repentance. Remember the definition—change!

Repentance is absolutely obvious in the life of one who has been saved.

Jesus then told a parable that indicated the fact that fruit ought to be evident.

Acts 26:20 says that when a person repents that person ought to “show deeds appropriate to repentance.”

It's in this statement that we begin to see what repentance really is. If we are talking about what does repentance mean, we discover from the fig tree parable that there ought to be evidence of genuine repentance. That is, repentance is not about feeling something, but doing something.

- (1) Repentance is not the same as feeling sorry about your sin. Feeling sorry says, “I am sorry.” Repentance is change.
- (2) Repentance is not the same as penance. Penance causes you to say, “I'll make it up.” Repentance says I will change.
- (3) Repentance is not the same as reformation. Reformation says, “I'll try to do better.” Repentance says I will change.

So, what is repentance?

Repentance is being **convicted** by Christ about sin in your life, **confessing** that sin as wrong, and living a **changed** life as the result of the conviction and the confession.

And a changed life is obvious. Somebody might say that they love you and you don't really know. They might say that they are sorry and you don't really know. But, when a person says that they repent, just observe for a little while and you will know.

Repentance is the ongoing activity of our relationship with God.

Just like confession, repentance is going to happen over and over again. Sure, there is a starting point, but then we repent continually as God shows us sin.

Now is the window of opportunity for repentance.

A [2006] medical study reveals just how difficult change is for people. Roughly 600,000 people have heart bypasses a year in America. These people are told after their bypasses that they must change their lifestyle. The heart bypass is a temporary fix. They must change their diet. They must quit smoking and drinking. They must exercise and reduce stress.

In essence, the doctors say, "Change or die."

You would think that a near-death experience would forever grab the attention of the patients. You would think they would vote for change. You would think the argument for change is so compelling that the patients would make the appropriate lifestyle alterations. Sadly that is not the case.

Ninety percent of the heart patients do not change. They remain the same, living the status quo. Study after study indicates that two years after heart surgery, the patients have not altered their behavior. Instead of making changes for life, they choose death.

Change is that difficult. The majority of the heart patients choose not to change. They act as if they would rather die.

Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, Simple Church (B & H Publishing Group, 2006), p. 229

If you delay repentance, you will have more one more day to repent of and one less day to repent in.