

An Urgent Message

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Preacher: Derek Lamont

[0 : 0 0] Can we turn back to Luke's Gospel chapter 13? I said we were going to look at the whole chapter in a kind of scanning it and you may have noticed that I didn't read the last section. I'm going to do that now and think about what Jesus says at the end here.

On verse 31 it's on page 1047 At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.

I replied, go tell that fox. I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow and on the third day I will reach my goal. In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem. Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you.

How often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you are not willing. Look, your house is left to you, desolate. And I tell you you will not see me again until you say blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

I want to look at this chapter today as an ongoing study through Luke's Gospel and as you'll know if you've been here over the last number of months that we're seeing a progression in Jesus' ministry. He's moving towards Jerusalem, moving towards the crucifixion and all that goes with that.

[1 : 2 4] So there's a kind of tightening up of the message and there's a clarifying of his task and his message is very urgent. And in this passage it's really although there's different angles and different themes to it, it's the same kind of message he wants to bring and the message he wants to bring to the people to whom he's preaching and because it's God's living word and we believe it's still relevant for us.

He says I want to save you. I want to save you. Now for many of us if we are Christians today we say oh well that's my cue to go to sleep because I'm already a believer, I hope not because I hope there's an urgency within the message from Jesus Christ that is a challenge to ourselves. But I know many people wouldn't like the exclusivity of what Jesus says that he is the way the truth and the life and there's no other way to heaven except through him.

And yet the reality is as far as we all have an exclusivity of position and belief. Whatever that position happens to be whether it's the all religions lead to God or whether it's something else, it's an exclusive position and so it's important for us to choose an exclusive position and Jesus is offering you his one which is with great authority and with great significance given today.

And he wants to do so by giving you a picture and giving us a picture, a very simple picture a very rustic picture of what he wants to do and he gives the picture of himself not as a lion not as a bear, not as a stallion but as a hen as a mother hen. That's the picture that Jesus, the Son of God, gives to us the people to whom he's speaking of why he is saying what he is saying. He gives them a picture that they will understand and he wishes that they, the people in Jerusalem who were rejecting him, particularly the Jews that they would just accept his protection and his salvation and his love just like a mother hen protects her young little pretty yellow chicks under her wings.

It brings to mind the illustration or the picture that is in different books which are illustrating Jesus' point of a farmer whose barn was burned down and as he was kind of walking through the charred remains in his barn and kicking different things that were burnt he came up to this kind of black ball of stuff and he went to kick it and there was movement there and he realised that it was the charred remains of a mother hen but when he kind of went to touch it and pull back the charred remains of the wing there was three or four fresh and living yellow chickens hidden under the wing. So that is the picture that Jesus is engendering here, is giving here that he wants to protect us, protect his people. That is what he sees the need for. That is how he pictures salvation. It is Jesus coming to us in a form of a protector, one who wants to embrace us and he does so because he sees it as something that is urgent. And so this chapter unfolds some of the reasons why he wants to do that and why he is the saviour that we believe in and those of us who are Christians have taken for ourselves and trust for our life and for our eternity. Because in verses 1 to 5 he talks about the reality of bad things that are happening.

[5 : 20] He talks about people who died when a tower fell on them and other people who died in a warfare and people ask the question were they really bad people then because of what happened to them. And Jesus wants to change their thinking and he says no listen you are. He says to us we are part of an evil world. You see the people that we are listening to and wanted him to blame these people who maybe died in the tower of Ceylon because they were particular sinners.

They done something absolutely wrong and so God was punishing them and Jesus wants to change the angle all together and he says that the evil that we see in the world is often not as a result of any one specific sin or the sin of the person who ends up dying but he is reminding us that bad things happen.

And that is the world we live in. That is the world we live in today. That is the world that we saw in the video. You know that is the world that we read about in the newspapers all the time. There is lots of bad things happening in this world. Now we can just choose to put cotton wool in our clothes and plug our ears to it and just carry on regardless but we know there are days in our own life where bad things happen.

Sometimes very bad things and sometimes even the best of our days are tainted by bad things happening. And Jesus is wanting us to see these bad things and interpret them differently. He doesn't want us to say well if that is your God I don't want to believe in him. God should deal with that or I don't deserve this. But it is not my fault.

He wants us to see it differently and this passage reminds us of what he is trying to get across. He is telling us and the Bible is telling us that the world is at odds with itself because it is at odds with God. So that the problems and the evil and the tensions and the greed and the selfishness and the ignorance and the rapes and the arrogance and all these things that are happening in this world have a spiritual genesis.

[7 : 32] They have a spiritual genesis because things are wrong because we have turned right from the very beginning as people as a universe, as a nation. We have turned our backs on God. And what Jesus wants his listeners to do and what he wants us to do is he wants us to recognize there are wrongs going on all over this world but not just out there in the world. He wants us to remind us that these things are in our own hearts as well and that we too are going to be faced eyeball to eyeball with death and destruction unless we change.

That is the message Jesus wants to get across. I tell you, no, he said but unless you repent, you too will all perish. So he is changing the way we look at things so that we don't wag our finger at God and walk away innocent. But he wants us to see and recognize and know what is going on but then look at ourselves and say, well that is happening just now. What is the future for me if I don't change? Because this world is a result of a rebellion against God. And he says what we need to do and what Jesus challenged today is, repent are we going to perish? And it simply means that we turn our whole way thinking round, you know, and that we recognize our need and our lostness and commit Jesus, this mother hen for protection and for salvation because he loves us. Jesus, the most famous version of the Bible for God, so loved the world that he gave, is one and only something that whoever believes in him should not perish.

Speaking here about perishing spiritually is the eternal life. And so Jesus gives this sense of urgency, of needing to come to him and dealing with ourselves primarily first and foremost in dealing with him.

I have a friend in London, a great friend in London, who we have lots of discussions with about spiritual matters, not Christian. And he loves different things about the gospel and he loves different things that Jesus said. It is great he says, but don't tell me about all that sin stuff because that is rubbish. Can't be bothered with all that heavy duty nonsense. And yet it's the very crux of the matter, isn't it? That we come to recognize our need because of the need we see outside of which we are apart.

Our need to deal with what is in our hearts. So he wants people and he wants us to move away from polite theorizing and intellectual debate and look into our hearts and be honest, is there a place for God? Is there a place for worship?

[10 : 16] Have we told any lies? Have we been an impure? Are we selfish to any degree? Have we kept in thought word, indeed, every one of the Ten Commandments? Jesus says, look at me in the eye.

And say, you're right, I'm wrong, I need you. You've died for me. Protect me. We're too independent, too strong, too individualistic, too macho.

What is it that would keep us from coming, throwing ourselves at the feet of Jesus and saying, I need you? Because that is what Jesus wants us to recognize when he turns the emphasis away from just generalizing about the world's need and looking to ourselves.

Because he goes on to say there's a day of reckoning versus 69, he speaks about this fruitless tree that will one day be cut down, even though it's given extra time and extra fertility to try and bear fruit.

And again, it's just a picture of the fact that one day there will be a day of reckoning for us all. Like that kind of fruit tree you might think, well, nothing's happening.

[11 : 28] Nobody's coming to cut me down, I'll just carry on not bearing fruit. Why, a tree would want to do that, I don't know. But anyway, that's maybe what the tree was thinking. And maybe spiritually, that's what you're thinking also.

I don't believe, I haven't come to Christ. I'm doing things that are sinful and well, nothing has struck me yet from heaven, there's no lightning bolt on me.

And yet Christ is saying, look, there will be a day of reckoning. And I am patient, I'm digging around you, I'm giving you opportunity. I want you to believe, but there will be a day when the opportunities will no longer be there.

And that will be too late, and you will know that, that it will be too late to turn to the living God. So He says there's going to be a day of reckoning. And He wants us therefore in the light of that.

And I know it's very kind of on 24th century to preach like this. But we can't help it, you know, because it's in the Word. And Jesus keeps challenging us into the channels that we should consider. He wants us therefore to prioritise.

[12 : 36] And the next section from verse 10, right through to verse 30, is about His wanting us to prioritise our lives. He challenges His people and does not to be hypocrites. And we've got that kind of event between this crippled woman and the Pharisees and Jesus healing her on the Sabbath day, and the Pharisees going up in arms and saying, oh that's terrible, He's breaking the Lord's day.

And Jesus calling them hypocrites. And He reminds us of not being hypocrites ourselves. The Pharisees condemned Jesus for healing a woman who was in desperate need. And they condemned Jesus for doing that because they were legalistic. And they put their own self-righteousness before the message of Jesus, and before compassion and love. And now we might not have the same issues today, but nonetheless, Jesus says don't get flustered people about religious sidelines and side issues and small matters. Because we're not to be like Pharisees, we're to be like the woman who needed healed.

Don't spend time judging everybody else's needs, but recognise and see what we need and we, if we are not Christ's, if we have not come to Him already for healing, we need ourselves to be healed. Stop telling everyone else they need to be healed, and start looking at what Jesus says about our own need for healing.

He says don't be a hypocrite, but then He says do agonise. And He gives us that picture of entering in at the narrow gate in verse 24.

Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many I tell you will try and enter and will not be able to. Make every effort. The word that is there is the word that we get agonised from.

[14 : 40] Agonise of my. And it's like striving. It's like being an athlete who strains every single sin you in order to win the race.

And Jesus is saying make every effort to make sure that you are a Christian now. What is He not saying? Well He's not saying that we need to make every effort to earn our favour with God, to somehow buy our salvation, to do our best. He's not saying that. We can't earn our salvation that way. It's not so much about effort as about our attitude it's about our priorities. It's about putting Him first.

If you're not a Christian today, but you're maybe kind of on the edges, it's about making finding Christ a priority not a hobby. Making it absolutely first in your life. Imagine if you were told today for example that you had an incurable disease. That's maybe not quite right because what I'm going to say is that you knew that there was a cure.

Okay, up till now it had been an incurable disease. But you had heard that somewhere there was a cure and it worked. Would you not make every effort? Would you not agonise and strive? You get on the phone, you get on the mobile, you get on the internet, you would look up with it where you can get this, you would find the money to buy it if that was what was needed. You would make every effort to get this cure for your illness.

And Jesus wants us to act the same way spiritually that we recognize that salvation is not kind of way down the priority list of our lives but it's actually of paramount importance that we will pray and seek and cry out and look for Jesus Christ. So he says it needs all your attention.

[16 : 32] Don't just give it that one kind of uncomfortable hour on a Sunday. You get to the end and you say, oh, survived again. Don't need to think about becoming a Christian. Don't need to have these awkward thoughts again until next Sunday.

It's great I could just live for myself and not think about this evil world and my death and what Jesus says about that and my separation from him until I come again.

He says, seek me first. He wants us to consider our priorities and agonize over becoming. Searching, looking for, accepting the gift of salvation.

And he wants us also to use the privileges that we have in verses 26 and 27. Because remember Jesus here speaking to the Jews and Jesus gives them a picture of the last day really when they go to meet him and they say, sir, open the door for us and he says, I don't know you where he from.

He says, but we ain't drank with you and you taught in our streets. He says, depart from me. I never knew you. He saw them words. Jesus is saying to the Jews and saying to us as well, listen, use your privileges. Use the privileges that you have. The Jews were God's people in many ways.

[17 : 49] They took for granted that they were God's people and they actually thought their privileges as God's people of the Old Testament would save them. They didn't reckon on what Jesus was saying about healing and about personal need and about salvation.

We need to remember as well today that privileges don't save us having a church to belong to, having a Bible that we read depending on the prayers of your mothers and your fathers and your friends.

All these things that are signs of God's favour in many ways will not save us. We have a responsibility even more so to act on them. The Jews didn't, we must.

Do use your privileges and when that keeps us from being shocked because he doesn't want us to be shocked. It doesn't have the same, I don't think, power for us, these verses 28 to 30, but it would have been very powerful for the Jew who read because he says, there will be weeping there and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves thrown out. People from all over the world, those who are last will be first and so on.

That would have been an utterly shocking statement for a first century Jew to hear from Jesus Christ because they knew about the kingdom of God, they knew about that last great feast, Messianic feast. They believed they were going to be very much part of that feast and they were going to have God as their God and they were exclusively going to be there. But Jesus says, not only are you not going to be there unless you turn, but the Gentiles will be there. The Gentile dogs, the Gentile pigs, the Gentiles that you regard as unclean, they are going to be there as they turn to Jesus Christ. It was an utterly shocking statement for a first century Jew.

[19 : 53] Christ says, I don't know you unless you turn to me. And we don't want that to be what Jesus says to us on that last great day, you know. He's not going to say, tell me how often you went to church, tell me that you are moral and good and upright.

But he'll say, I don't know you or I do know you. And we only know Jesus Christ when we are in a relationship with Him. And we can only be in a relationship with Him when the sin that separates us from Him is dealt with and across. That's what he says.

In some ways it would be great if it was different. But that's the answer. And it's the answer of love and it's the answer of grace. And we can have all kinds of questions about all other things. But if Jesus says to us on that day, I don't know you. And if today, however much knowledge of the Bible we have, or how much privileges our background have, if you can, in your heart, and you may not say it to anyone else, but say, I don't know Jesus.

I don't know what he's talking about. What's he on about? I know who Jesus was. I know what the Bible's about. What's he talking about, knowing Jesus personally? If you don't know that, then you need to seek Him. And you need to know Him as Lord and Saviour and be in that spiritual relationship with Him. Because he says His kingdom is coming.

Going back to verses 18 to 21, he talks about this kingdom, being like a mustard seed, or like yeast that's mixed into a large amount of flour. And I don't have time really to go into that.

[21 : 34] But really, the picture seems to be that the kingdom of God is quite quietly, quite unassumingly, in a way that's not really noticed terribly much. It is growing, and it is having influence.

And one day it will be brought to its conclusion. So ever since Calvary, there are more and more people becoming Christians. In every corner of the globe, His kingdom is coming. Doesn't make the headlines, doesn't make the news at six.

Isn't interested, panorama aren't interested in the coming of the kingdom of God. But every day, people from every nation and every class and every religion and every colour and every race are coming to know Jesus Christ. His kingdom is coming. And we would be foolish to ignore that.

Perhaps not very evident in Scotland, one of the most secular nations in the universe. But it is coming, and people are becoming Christians all over the world.

And we're looking for it to happen here too, more. We're wanting the church to be full. And all the churches to be full in the city of ours. Time to change. It's time to see it happening.

[22 : 42] His kingdom is coming. Don't ignore that reality. Don't stick our heads in the sand. Don't depersonalise the need for salvation into some kind of esoteric philosophical discussion about the state of the world. But take it and recognise our own need of redemption.

And that is important for us as Christians too. Because spend so much of our time just relegating it out from our lives and not allowing Christ into healers, to redeemers, to change us, to renew us, to refresh us. Let's not allow that to happen.

So as we conclude, Jesus reminds us again, and I remind you the words of Jesus, let me protect you. That's his invitation that we read at the end of this chapter. He speaks with great love, facing the cross, nail to a tree, as the Son of God, knowing the wrath and the punishment of God, coming as the answer himself.

Let me protect you. What do I say to you today if you're not a Christian? It's not about evidence. It's not about you needing to have more evidence of what your need is and what the state of the world is or of the philosophical arguments. It's a matter of trust.

Hundreds and thousands of people have trusted, and millions have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ on the evidence that is. It's about changing the exclusivity of the views you hold to being views that are exclusive for Christ. I'm just going to stand up on a day of judgment and say, I've done my best. Go ahead. That's an exclusive position of folly, because Jesus says, I've gone to the cross. He speaks with great love, and it's not about evidence, it's about submission. It's about seeing our need, and it's about willingness to be healed, willingness to come to Christ.

[24 : 49] They say that hanging clarifies the mind, and I wish that was true for us more spiritually, that we had this sense of urgency, because our life spiritually is at stake.

It's a great motive, isn't it, as well, for evangelism, for us as Christians, explaining the love of Jesus Christ, His protection, His answer to this world, and to its evil and to its darkness, and to our own death and our own separation from God.

As we pray about that, let's live it and let's share it with love, because soon we will not have the opportunity so to do. The friends that God has placed as among need to hear in humility and in grace and in gentleness about the Jesus Christ that has changed our lives. Let's not be embarrassed by that, but let's share it and believe it and know it in our hearts.

We're praying for conversions in our church. Let's see these conversions in our friendships, and as God works through us and in us.

I do hope that some of us can consider helping the evangelism that has been done from here, either at Halloween or later on in the year, in the evangelism training.

[26 : 10] It would be really great to have some of us toggled up and tooled to evangelise in our streets.

May God bless our thoughts on that passage together.