



Growth Group Questions
September 29, 2024
“Do You See the Potential?”

Context:

In this passage Luke continues with the theme that was begun in Luke 12:57–59 on the need to be reconciled to God. Another emphasis that can be seen in this section of Scripture is the coming of the divine judgment. Just like Jeremiah, God had now sent another prophetic voice, His Son (as well as John the Baptist), to preach a message of repentance and judgment. Like the Galileans killed by Pilate and the people of Jerusalem upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, they too would perish (Luke 13:1-5).

The parable revolves around a fig tree in a vineyard that has failed to bear fruit for three years, though it is possible that it had been much longer than that. In the context of Luke 13 this is a warning spoken to Israel, but also to all who are listening to Jesus. There is an issue with using resources and not producing fruit. We are not created to just take up space.

The vineyard owner expresses his frustration to the gardener, instructing him to cut down the tree. However, the gardener pleads for patience, requesting one more year to cultivate and fertilize the tree in hopes that it will bear fruit. The Greek phrase used here for “next year” has the same construction in in I Timothy 6:19 where it is translated *“for the future.”* It may not be a literal year that the gardener is asking for. However, there is a recognition that if the tree does not produce fruit in the future, it will be cut down.

The word used for “leave it alone” in verse 8 is the word that is used in the New Testament for forgiveness. However, the only way that forgiveness comes is from outside of the tree itself. Renewal and transformation cannot come from just within the tree.

Ultimately, the gardener is asking for grace (give it more time) and mercy (forgive it). As 2 Peter 3:9 reminds us we should be grateful that, *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”*

Scripture:

Isaiah 5:1-2

¹ I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. ² He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit.

Isaiah 5:5-6

⁵ Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. ⁶ I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briars and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it.”

Luke 13:6-9

⁶ Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. ⁷ So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’ ⁸ “‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’”

Leviticus 19:23-25

²³ “When you enter the land and plant any kind of fruit tree, regard its fruit as forbidden. For three years you are to consider it forbidden; it must not be eaten. ²⁴ In the fourth year all its fruit will be holy, an offering of praise to the Lord. ²⁵ But in the fifth year you may eat its fruit. In this way your harvest will be increased. I am the Lord your God.

1 Corinthians 2:9-10

⁹ However, as it is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived”— the things God has prepared for those who love him— ¹⁰ these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.



Questions:

1. What do we mean when we say a person has “potential”?
2. Pastor Paul spoke about how others are often the ones to help us find our potential. Is there someone in your life who helped call out the potential in you?
3. What does the Bible tell us about achieving our potential?
4. In Luke 13:6-9, Jesus tells a parable about a barren fig tree. What does this parable teach us about the character of God?
5. What can we learn about achieving our God-given potential from the parable of the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6-9)?
6. Pastor Paul said that we are all created to bear fruit, but that the benefit of the fruit is never for our sake but for the benefit of others. What does that statement mean to you?
7. Pastor Paul also said that all of us are born with potential because we are made in the image of God. If we truly believed that statement, how might our attitudes toward ourselves and others change?

Pastor Paul’s Sermon Reflections:

1. Who has been an “illuminator” in your life? How has that impacted where you are today?
2. Where in your life has God been “nudging, calling or pushing you” to lean into your potential?

