

Pre-Sermon: This is to help you prepare for hearing from God's Word.

- Read Luke 13:18-21
- What does this passage tell you about the kingdom of God?

Sermon Questions: This will help you evaluate how well you were listening.

- What was the sermon about?
- Why does Israel's rejection of Jesus produce such big questions about God and His plan?
- How does Luke structure chapter 13 and how does that structure help you understand his answer to that question?
- What are some of the similarities between verses 1-9 and 31-35? 10-17 and 22-30?
- How does the structure of this passage highlight the importance of verses 18-21?
- What is the point Jesus is making about the kingdom of God?

Sermon Synopsis: This is a short summary to help you reflect on the message.

God made huge promises in the Old Testament about the kingdom of God and what He was going to do for Israel. And yet we read what happened in the gospel of Luke and for the most part we read about Israel rejecting Jesus.

That can seem like a problem. It certainly produces questions. Theological ones. Like, what happened to Israel? What's God's plan for Israel? Did something go wrong? How do the Old Testament and New Testament connect? But also practical ones. If the people who seem like they are supposed to be a pretty big part of the kingdom of God, reject the One whom God sent to bring it, you've got to wonder, what does that mean? Does that stop God from being able to keep His promises? Does that mean the plan has changed? There's probably no bigger question, about God and His plan, than the Messiah coming and Israel rejecting Him. If God's got an answer for that, He's got an answer. And Luke is showing us Jesus' answer. In fact this is one of the primary reasons Luke writes chapter 13. He gives an answer to questions like these in a really fascinating way. This chapter is very structured. Not a 1,2,3 outline like we want to structure things. But there's a certain structure to the narrative and once you see the structure, it's a little easier to get the main point.

Verses 1-9 and verses 31-35 are parallel.

The chapter opens with people giving Jesus a kind of report about something bad that a government official did to a group of Galileans. Jesus then responds by giving them a warning. They need to repent or they will perish. After that he tells a story, and it's a kind of down to earth story, that is connected back to Old Testament images about Israel. There's a lament in the middle, something someone is sad about. Now look at how the chapter ends. People come to Jesus and give him a report about a political leader who wants to do something bad to him. Then Jesus responds by telling them to give Herod a warning. After that Jesus laments. This time he laments using a very down to earth kind of illustration, which is also an Old Testament image, about God. Israel didn't repent, so Jesus perished.

Now what? Look at verses 10-17 and compare them with verses 22-30.

The first passage opens with Jesus teaching in a synagogue. He sees someone you would not expect to be there, and reverses her situation. She is on the outside, he brings her in. She's bound and he gives her freedom. She was demon possessed and now she glorifies God. As you look at this woman, it's like you are getting a small picture of someone who is getting to enjoy the kingdom of God. But not everyone is excited about it. The ruler of the synagogue is not happy this woman is getting to experience this. So he begins trying to stop people from experiencing the incredible Messianic, kingdom blessing that Jesus is bringing. But Jesus shames him for it. In the end, the religious leader who was first in the synagogue is humbled. But, the demon possessed woman who would have been

last for sure, is honored. Luke concludes by noting a division between two groups as some are shamed and some are filled with joy. That division is based on their response to Jesus.

What about verses 22-30? Is there any connection? These verses begin with Jesus teaching again. It is good to notice that because from this point on it starts seeming different. But if you look closely at what happens you notice that once again you have a master or ruler who is standing in front of the door to people experiencing the Messianic blessings God promised with individuals coming to him wanting to get inside. But He won't let them in. He tells them to leave. He has divided between those who are able to be part of the kingdom and those who are not. But in a surprising way! The people you thought were first and would experience the kingdom are last, and people you thought were last who would never experience the kingdom are first.

Seeing all these connections may feel a little different for you, but it helps you understand how this all fits into Luke's explanation about what's happening with Jesus. He's giving us an answer to our question. Yes, Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament promise. But he was rejected. The problem wasn't with Jesus. It was with the people listening. Jesus told them what He is going to do, proved that He can do it and called on them to repent. He even told them there's only a short amount of time to do it. But they wouldn't. Instead they conspired to kill him. That grieves Jesus. But that doesn't stop Jesus. We get an example of how he's going to do exactly what He said He was going to do in verses 10-17. We see He's able to reverse the effects of the curse for needy individuals. But as he does what the Old Testament promised the Messiah would do, the religious leadership of Israel stands in front of Him and uses religious excuses to try to stop certain kinds of people from coming to Him so they can be part of the kingdom and experience the blessings God promised. They are making divisions about who deserves the kingdom and who doesn't on the basis of how well they thought people kept themselves clean on the outside. But that's a wrong reading of the Old Testament. And that's not how Jesus divides. So, in the end, there is going to be a great reversal. The people they thought were on the outside, who were last, and could not experience the kingdom are going to be the ones Jesus pursues and brings in to enjoy this great big feast with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets, while the ones you would have expected, are going to be cast out.

Now, if you are wondering if we can be sure about that, look at verses 18-21. If you think about the way Luke structures these stories, this is the center. It is the key passage. And what's it about? It's about the kingdom of God. **AND THIS IS WHAT LUKE WANTS YOU TO UNDERSTAND.** The kingdom of God appears first like something small, but it doesn't end there. It's going to be like a mustard seed that becomes a tree. And not just any tree. Like the tree describing Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom back in Daniel 4. But, here's the punchline. You know what happened to that tree in Daniel 4? God said chop it down. Which of course, is the part that's missing here. The tree Jesus is planting is never going to be cut down. This is a kingdom that is going to last forever. Even if it doesn't look like much now, it is going to become the most powerful, most important, kingdom in the history of the universe. And , **NO ONE CAN STOP IT!** No one. That's the point of the second story. Once you put leaven in bread you can't unleaven it. You look at Jesus, you look at Israel, you look at what happened and I can understand you might have some questions about God's promises and what you hear about God's plan. Is God faithful, can God do it, will God do it? **THE ANSWER IS YES.** God loves to put Himself in seemingly impossible situations, where everybody looks at it, and says I guess it is over, there is no way, and then He does exactly what He said He was going to do, in a way that helps you see it's bigger and better than you were even imagining. **AND SO CHURCH TRUST HIM.** He's said He is going to do something amazing through Jesus. It's called the Kingdom of God. And He's going to do it. It may not look like much now, but it will and **THERE'S NO ONE ON EARTH OR IN THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE WHO CAN STOP IT!**

Application Questions: We can't just read these passages, study them. It's vital you respond.

- What hope do you receive from this message?
- Are there any ways this message helped you appreciate the glorious good news of the gospel and what God is doing through Jesus more?