

“A Second Chance?”—Luke 13:6-9

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “A Second Chance?”, is Luke 13:6-9 → *Jesus told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?’ And he answered him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Think of the feelings a person goes through when he receives a second chance in life. It can bring a feeling of relief in the midst of failure. Depending upon the severity of your behavior on the first “go-round” and its ensuing consequences, it provides an opportunity to do an activity again and do it better or right. However, this could also produce feelings of anxiety because the pressure is on not to mess up again. Given a second chance can also humble a person in the realization he is not deserving of such forgiveness and grace.

If a person is offered a second chance in relationships it usually means some sin has been committed. In this case it becomes difficult to offer a person a second chance because it means that one must overlook his sin and forgive. Maybe offering a second chance is not that difficult. Rather, it's offering the third, fourth and fifth "second chances" which become more and more challenging! It feels like there may come a limit where a "second chance" is simply impossible to give. Peter thought that he was being generous when he asked Jesus, *How often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?* (cf. Matthew 18:21) He apparently wanted a set limit in the midst of his struggles with forgiveness.

In the context of Jesus pointing out the need for all people to repent so they do not perish Jesus told a parable about a fig tree. This parable stresses the importance of people experiencing God's grace and patience in waiting for all people to experience His forgiveness and salvation **before it's too late** and there are no second chances.

There are many people who have given in to the satanic delusion that they don't have to repent now because they've got a whole lifetime to experience before they have to make God a priority. They "put off" believing in God's plan of salvation for their lives in Christ, being deceived into thinking either that they have a lot of time left to believe or they'll have a second chance to

believe after Christ's Second Coming on the Last Day. Nowhere in all of Jesus' teaching about His return on Judgment Day does He give an impression that you will have a second chance to repent and believe the Gospel at His return. On the contrary He says in Matthew 24:44 → *You must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. When He comes again your fate is sealed and there are no second chances!*

The main point of the parable is that God is patient, giving us more time now while reminding us that this time will come to an end. God gives us this time not simply to indulge ourselves in self-serving, selfish, sinful gratification but rather to repent of such acts and cling to His forgiveness in the Person & Work of Jesus! He gives us more time to come and receive the forgiveness of sins through His Word and Sacraments regularly!

Throughout the Bible God's people—His Church under both the old and new covenants—are described as a vineyard of His planting in the world, within which He has planted the choicest fruit-bearing plants. Jesus' vineyard parables are based upon the vineyard picture given by the prophet in Isaiah 5:1-2 → *Yahweh had a vineyard on a very fertile hill . . . and planted it with choice vines; He . . . looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.* Since it was planted by His grace He expected it to produce good fruit. Instead, it produced bad fruit. Destruction in the midst of righteous judgment

upon sin was inevitable if God's people would not repent and trust in Him!

Remember, you are a "planting of God" **by His grace for a purpose!** Romans 7:4 says: *You . . . have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to Him Who has been raised from the dead, **in order that we may bear fruit for God.*** As a result of His grace at work in our lives in Christ, God looks for us to do good works just as a vine naturally produces its *fruit*. As the choicest of vines we will produce good fruit!

Jesus' application in this parable could actually refer to what He was experiencing at this point in His earthly ministry. He came to God's people—the planting of His gracious choice—to bring the blessings of salvation through faith in His Person & Work with its forgiveness of sins. However, the fruit He observed was the rejection He was experiencing from those people. God people were not producing behavior true to God's grace in their lives. His purpose was to die as the perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of their sins. It could be that He was referring to one more year before His earthly ministry would come to an end with His death, resurrection and ascension. He had one more year to *dig around them and put . . . manure on them . . .* that is, to proclaim God's Law to them in an effort to bring them to receive the Gospel through repentance and produce the fruits of faith. (cf. Matthew 3:8)

In His gracious patience, God is actually providing all of us with a "second

chance” **now** because there is no “second chance” when His day of judgment comes. The urgency of repenting of your sins **now—today**—is reinforced by the fact that we who live on this side of the completion of Jesus’ earthly ministry do not know when He will come back again. He has fulfilled all that is necessary for your salvation! He has accomplished it all for you! The proclamation of Jesus from Mark 1:15 is for us as well: *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.*

Listen to how this time is described in 2 Peter 3:9 → *The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.* The delay of Jesus’ return is happening as an opportunity for God’s divine Will to be accomplished **now**—that **all** should reach repentance. God is allowing a fixed amount of time for people to recognize their sin before God, confess it to Him and trust in the forgiveness of that sin accomplished by Jesus for them.

2 Peter 3:11-13 talks about urgency and godly living: *Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God . . . according to His promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. We live lives of holiness and godliness by trusting completely in Christ’s righteousness for us! (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:30) We*

live *lives of holiness and godliness* by living in obedience to God's Word!
"God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity." (Meaning of the 2nd Petition of Luther's Small Catechism)

If there is a "second chance" it is **right now**. Actually, it's a "chance of a Lifetime" to be in heaven with Jesus forever on that Day when there will be no "second chances!" No matter how broken, how sinful, how messed up or how despairing you may feel, Jesus comes to you with open arms and the promise recorded in John 6:37 → *Whoever comes to Me I will never drive away.* (NIV)
Amen.

*Working together with Him, then,
we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.*

*For He says, "In a favorable time I listened to you,
and in a day of salvation I have helped you."*

*Behold, now is the favorable time;
behold, now is the day of salvation.*

(2 Corinthians 6:1-2)

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