

How to Look Back...2018

How to Look Forward...2019

Monday, 12/31 at 6 PM

New Year's Eve – 2018

2019 Divine Services: Sundays 8 & 10:45 and Mondays 7 PM

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Here we are in the last hours of 2018; thinking back, *let us acknowledge some of God's blessings and give Him thanks*:

- ★ We are still alive – *thanks be to God!*
- ★ We have decent health – *thanks be to God!*
- ★ We have more than we need – *thanks be to God!*
- ★ Our sins are forgiven through Jesus – *thanks be to God!*
- ★ God has a good plan for us in 2019 – *thanks be to God!*

Now, ✨knowing we have been blessed and ✨rejoicing that our sins are forgiven, *let us be optimistic as we step into 2019!*

Tonight we are in the Gospel of Luke; in chapter 12 Jesus taught on many topics. This is a brief summary: JESUS SAID:

- ★ Don't be a hypocrite, pretending to be something you are not; instead, *let everyone see who you are!*
- ★ Don't fear people; instead, *fear God, who has the authority to cast people into hell!*
- ★ Don't be ashamed of Me; instead, *acknowledge to others that you know Me!*
- ★ Don't love the riches of this world; instead, *be rich in your relationship with God!*

- ✦ Don't be anxious; instead, *trust in the LORD to provide all that you need!*
- ✦ Don't become complacent; instead, *remain ever ready for My return!*
- ✦ Don't expect peace on earth; instead, *realize that I came to make a division between believers and non-believers!*
- ✦ Don't focus on temporary things; instead, *pay attention to eternal things!*
- ✦ Don't be stubborn; instead, as it's better to settle with an earthly accuser – *before going before a judge*, so it's better to repent – *before the final judgment!*

Now, getting into Luke 13, Jesus was told of two tragic events in which multiple people died. The people presumed those who died must have been worse sinners – *because of how they died*, but Jesus said to them, “**I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish**” (v. 5 NAS).

Now, as we get into tonight's text in **Luke 13:6-9**, *we continue with the topic of repentance*:

1. **God Expected the People of Jerusalem to Repent:**

⁶ **And [Jesus] told this parable: “A man had a fig tree [Jerusalem] [having been] planted in his vineyard [Israel], and he came seeking fruit [repentance] on it and found none. // So Jesus told a *simple story* in order to make a *spiritual point*. ♣The man is God, ♣the fig tree is Jerusalem, ♣the vineyard is the nation of Israel, and ♣the fruit is repentance.**

- a. What is repentance? Here are two ways to define repentance according to **Lenski (177-178)**:

- i. Repentance is “...that religious change of the heart which turns from sin and guilt to cleansing and forgiveness by God’s grace.”
 - ii. Repentance “...looks both backward toward the regretted sin and forward toward the accepted pardon...”
 - b. What was God looking for in Jerusalem? He wanted them to see their misplaced trust in *their works for their salvation*; then He wanted them to *trust in Jesus as their only Savior!*
 - c. How to look back on 2018: Regarding all of our sins, let us regret them – knowing †*they were not pleasing to God*, and †*they were not good for us*.
 - d. How to look forward to 2019: Always with faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, *rejoicing that He received our sins and our punishment*; therefore, *through Him*, we are †*pardoned*, †*forgiven*, and †*washed clean in God’s sight!*
2. **God’s Grace has a Time Limit:** ⁷ **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?’**
- a. Regarding the three years of seeking fruit: Those years refer to the time when John the Baptizer began his ministry until the time of our text. Now, *thinking about the powerful ministries of John and Jesus*, God expected many to repent; however, *when Jesus came to His own people*, most did not receive Him.
 - b. Regarding the opportunity to repent: The Bible says, “**Seek the LORD while He may be found;**

Call upon Him while He is near” (Isa. 55:6 NAS).

Those words imply that someday those who seek the LORD will not find Him and, *though He is near now*, someday He will be very far away.

3. **God Wants Everyone to be Saved:** ⁸ **And he answered him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. ⁹ Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”**

// I challenge you to carefully *hear* and *think about* these key statements by **Lenski (730-733)**:

- a. **“We should not erase the wrath by the mercy, nor lose sight of the mercy because of the wrath.”** The mercy is great; the wrath is horrible!
- b. Jesus **“uses every means of grace... [He] goes at his work hopefully... not halfheartedly, pessimistically, thinking that there is no use.”** So He really loves all, *and wants all to be saved!*
- c. **“It is a fact that judgment is often preceded by an intensification of grace.”** The grace is God’s undeserved love; when it comes to unbelievers, *may they never misinterpret it for salvation.*
- d. **“...man may nullify every effort of [God’s] liberating, saving power and willfully cast it from him for good...”**

Let Us Pray: Dear Father, TYSM for making us sorry for our sins and giving us faith in Jesus; please grant us a 2019 that is good for us, honoring to You, and a blessing to others!

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