

Read: Luke 13:1-9

Help in Doing Good

Luke 13:6-9

Then [Jesus] 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. 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?’

“‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Theo was mad. Everything was great—he and his best friend Anton had been happily playing. But then Anton took Theo’s toy and wouldn’t give it back. So Theo went and told his mom. He wanted her to tell Anton to give the toy back. He wanted his mom to be just as mad as he was.

Instead, Theo’s mom explained that Anton didn’t have brothers and sisters like Theo, so Anton needed practice in learning how to share. Rather than getting mad at Anton, Theo’s mom suggested that through his actions, he be patient and show Anton how to share.

Just like Anton, there’s something that everybody isn’t good at. But it’s something much more serious than sharing toys. Because of sin, none of us are good at obeying God. None of us are good at living like God tells us to live. On our own, we’re just like the tree that Jesus talks about in today’s reading—none of us are good at producing spiritual fruit.

There’s a struggle that happens inside us every day, a struggle between our naughty side and the nice, new person we are in Christ. The apostle Paul sums up this struggle: “For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing” (Romans 7:19). How terrible! Is there any possible way to win that struggle and do good?

Left on our own, we will always lose that struggle between good and evil on this side of heaven. Anton needed help learning how to share. The tree in today’s reading needed help in producing fruit. When it comes to living like Christians, we need help too.

Where does that help come from? It comes from Jesus. He crushed everything wrong with us and made everything right between us and God. He showed us through his words and actions how to obey God. It comes from God’s Word, where God speaks to us and strengthens our faith. And it comes from everybody who helps you better understand God’s Word: faithful pastors, loving teachers, and patient parents.

One more thing: don't be confused about why we do good. We don't do good to make God like us more or to avoid being punished. We do good because we love God. We appreciate everything he's done for us. Now, we want to do what God asks of us!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Who can help us do good?
- Where can we learn more about how to obey God?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Why can't we perfectly obey God on our own?
- What's one way you could have acted differently today in order to better obey God?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Even though you will always struggle with your sinful nature, why don't you have to worry that God will lose patience with your struggle?
- Jesus' story talked about a tree in danger of getting cut down because there was no fruit. What does spiritual fruit look like in your life? Why is it so important?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank you for being so patient with us as we seek to obey God. Forgive us when we don't. Encourage us to always look to you for how to live. Amen.