

## 13.9.26 am

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Date: 13 September 2026

Preacher: Stuart King

[0:00] Well good morning and welcome to our service this morning. It's wonderful to see so many people out. I think the vast majority of people in the room know me. For those maybe that are visiting with us, you'll be glad to hear after the service that I'm not the minister here.

So don't weigh up the level of preaching with what's normally here every week. My name's Stuart King. I'm the minister in training now. I've been in the congregation for a number of years but I'm now minister in training.

So the congregation here are very much used to having a minister in training. One slightly taller, thinner, with more hair. But if we could be as much of a blessing to the congregation as Scott and Fiona were and the family, then we'll be doing very well.

So we ask for your prayers in the next couple of years. I'll not go through every single one of the intimations. I'll just pick out a few that are maybe worth noting. Firstly, especially for visitors, there's a tea and coffee after the service this morning. So please do stay behind if you can.

We're just going to serve teas and coffee at the table here and it'll be good to get to know you if you're visiting with us. The service this evening will be taken by the minister at 6pm. Prior to that, there'll be a half-five informal prayer meeting in the room next door.

[1:18] So be encouraged to come along. And especially for the service this evening, please do come along to hear. We're working through Revelation. So I would encourage you to come along.

YF will meet after the evening service. So any of the S1 to S6 guys, please take a note of that. We'll be, I was going to say over the course of the next seven years, but seven weeks, I'm not with you for that long.

Over the next seven lessons, we're going to be looking at encounters with Jesus. So we're going to be looking at the Centurion this evening. So please do come along from half-seven till half-eight.

Then there's a number of ones throughout the rest of the week. All pretty normal.

Prayer meeting at half-seven. Please be encouraged to come along to that. And then there's also the wedding. I don't know. There they are over there. There's a wedding on Friday and there's a warm welcome to the church family to come along.

I think it's 1pm. Is that right? Got it in the head. 1pm on Friday. Please be encouraged to come along for the wedding of Ruthie and Dahl. Last one for me, it's nearly quarter past eleven probably, but last one for me is just next week's services.

[2:22] The morning one will be at the normal time taken by the minister, David. But the evening one will be joining with Scalpy. It's their communion weekend. So just take a note of that. There'll be no evening service in here, but we will join with Scalpy in the evening.

So we'll just say a wee word of prayer just before we begin by singing to God's praise. Heavenly Father, Lord, we give you thanks. We give you thanks that we find ourselves here in your house. We thank you for the intimation sheet that we see before us. We thank you for the number of ministries that we have available here in the church.

And we pray that you would continue to bless us and that we would do all of these things to your glory. Not to the glory of self, not to the glory of North Harris Free Church, but all to your glory and to you alone, Lord. So be with us just now as we sing praises to your name. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

So we'll begin our public worship by singing to God's praise in Psalm 80. In Psalm 80 from verse 14 to 19 of the Psalm in the Scottish Psalter.

O God of hosts, we thee beseech, return now unto thine. Look down from heaven and love behold, and visit this thy vine. This vineyard which thine own right hand hath planted us among, and that same branch which for thyself thou hast made to be strong.



for the test results that many among us had that were positive.

We give thanks, Lord, for those times where we've worried about friends and loved ones in hospital or those that are going through investigations, Lord. Yet when we see positive outcomes, we don't always come to our knees to give you thanks, Lord.

But we ought to continually thank you for all these answered prayers. We think as a congregation, we have many names in our minds that we ought to be giving thanks for, Lord.

[9:51] Those who are with us this very day, those who we thought would be months away before they were with us. But we give thanks, Lord, for those answered prayers as those who are with us. We pray for those at this moment who are maybe unwell and unable to be with us.

We pray for those who are housebound and unable to be here. We ask, Lord, that you would be with them, that they would find their comfort in you. And although absent in the body here, we know that they are very prayerful in being here with us, Lord.

So we pray that you would be with them and that they would indeed find that comfort with you. We especially bring before you those who have no desire to be here, those who woke up this morning and will lay their heads down this evening, if it is your will, that have no thought of you, that have no desire to be here, no desire to hear your word, no desire to look inwardly into their own lives and to see that sin, to see that sin that needs a saviour.

We pray for them, Lord. But we don't just pray for them from a distance. But we ask, Lord, that you would give us opportunities to speak to them, that you would give us opportunities to witness to them, to share the hope that is within us.

For there is hope. There is much destruction in the world. There is much death and decay in the world. But we give thanks, Lord, that we indeed have a hope that's fulfilled at the cross.

[11:09] So we pray that we would have those opportunities as individuals, but also as a congregation. We thank you for the many, again, ministries that we see on our intimation sheet and those touch points that we have with our community to share the word.

And we pray that you would equip us all and maybe equip those that are not yet serving. Lord, we ask that you would equip them and that you would grant them a burning desire to be able to share their own testimony, your own testimony, but ultimately to share the word that we have before us, which is our precious, precious word which we ought to be sharing.

We again pray for Ruthie and all, Lord. We give you thanks for them and for their witness in the congregation here. And we pray for them this coming Friday, Lord, and ask that as they get married at the end of this week, Lord, that you would continue to be at the centre of their relationship, that you would be at the core of all that they do.

As you have been so far, Lord, we give you thanks for them, for the way in which they serve you here. We ask, Lord, that that would continue to be rooted and grounded in you and in your word, Lord.

So we pray for them. We pray for family and friends that will be coming. We pray that you grant journeying mercies to those coming that day, Lord, to celebrate their coming together in marriage, Lord.

[12:26] So we pray for them. We pray as well, Lord, for the upcoming communions, not just in Scalpe, but in Carloway as well, and in Barvis, I believe, Lord. We pray for those communion services.

We pray for Kinloch as they meet today, just now, as they meet around the table, Lord. We pray for them. We give thanks that we have these opportunities to remember the death and the resurrection of your son.

So we pray that as we do, that we are looking inwardly first and foremost, especially those of us that have professed a faith, that we would be examining ourselves, especially even in advance of our own communion in the coming weeks, that we would be examining ourselves, seeing where we fall short as we all do, and that we would be asking for the Holy Spirit to work in us as we seek to grow in our faith and grow in our understanding of you, Lord.

So we pray that you would be with us just now, Lord. Pray for the young ones. We give you thanks for the many that we see. We give you thanks for Sunday school and for youth fellowship, Lord, and ask that you would continue to bless that work, that these young ones would be going into the playground, would be going into the workplaces, wherever they are, rooted and grounded in your word, and that they would be able to share their faith and to share that which they learn in your walls here, Lord.

So be with us just now. Forgive us for all of our sins. In Christ's precious name we pray. Amen.

Okay, boys and girls, if you could maybe come down to the front, that would be helpful.

[13:54] I've got a couple of questions to ask you. I've got nothing to show you on screen. I've got something I will show you, but I'll bide my time on that. Okay.

Now I know how Lois and the family all feel. I've got to see Emily's face. Please don't speak to me. So, hands up if you like eating fruit.

Oh, you're all looking at each other. I think everyone would probably say they like eating fruit. Now, I want some of you to tell me your favourite fruits. Put your hand up if you've got a favourite fruit.

Anna, what's your favourite fruit? Grapes. Finlay? Grapes. Joseph, what's yours? Mary. That's a great shout.

Lydia, what's your one? I'm really hoping somebody says the one I've got. Olivia, what's your favourite one? Holly. Okay, next. Holly? Bonnie, sorry. Mango.

[14:55] Wow, we're getting too exotic. Think UK. Think the UK. Think red. Think Wimbledon. It begins with ssss and ends in berries. Strawberries.

Strawberries. Fantastic. Well done. Chings we got there. So, who likes strawberries? Put your hands up if you like strawberries. It might not be your favourite but do you like strawberries? So, if I was to give you a strawberry, would you eat it?

Yeah. So, I actually got strawberries with me. So, I'm going to show you. You probably don't think I've got strawberries. I've got this packet of strawberries with you. So, now that you see the strawberries and I'll show it to everyone. We've got a packet of strawberries.

Who wants to eat the first one if I open them? No. Not me. Who said not me? Why not? These are, look. Look at strawberries on the picture. I'll give you a wee strawberry.

Do you want one? No. Why not? Who wants one? Why are all your hands down? It's not a strawberry. Strawberry? What? What's that then?

[15:51] Strawberry. It's not. Of course it's a strawberry. So, nobody wants one of these strawberries. No. And what's the problem with these strawberries? Finlay?

They're seeds. They're seeds. Yeah, but it says strawberries. So, you don't want to eat the seeds. They're empty. Strawberries. So, what would they taste like if you all had a seed just now? What would it be like?

Would it taste like a lovely juicy strawberry? No, it would taste like a nut. A nut? Good shout, yeah. It would be quite nutty. But not, it would taste like a strawberry. So, the reason I'm bringing this, and I'm not going to take, you can't take these with you.

I'll maybe leave them here. There's some keen gardener that's probably desperate for strawberries. I want to talk to you about fruit. And when you guys go to Sunday school, we're going to talk to the older ones about fruit. And a little bit about what fruit means.

Now, in the Bible, there are lots of fruits. And we are going to look at a tree. Does anyone know what a fig is? I'm surprised nobody picked a fig as your favourite fruit. No? I remember the dreaded fig role. But, we know what a fig is.

[16:51] So, a fig is a type of fruit. And we're going to look at a tree. And it specifically was a fig tree. But, just like this packet of strawberries, which I've got here, they're not quite fruitful.

They're not quite fruit yet. What has to happen for these to become strawberries that you would be happy to eat? They need to grow. They need to grow. They need to grow. But, what has to happen? What does somebody have to do to them? Do I just leave them here?

And then, David will one day have a wee strawberry plant next to them in the pulpit. Bonnie. Put them in soil. Put them in soil. Water them. Water them. So, something has to be done.

You have to work at it. Can you just chuck these strawberries in the foyer and hopefully there'll be strawberries there next week? No. We have to work at it. And it's the same with our own lives. And we're going to speak to the older ones a little bit about the fruit that we have in our own lives.

Now, if we have fruit in our own lives, it doesn't mean there's strawberries growing off our elbows or Joseph's favourite, a melon growing out my ankle. That's not what it means when we have fruit in our own lives.

[17:50] What it means, what sort of fruits do we have in our lives? What are some of the things that are good in our lives that other people can see that are good in us, that maybe make people think that we know the Lord, Benjamin?

Our hearts. Our hearts. Yes, what comes from our hearts? What do we do to other people? Would we be rude to other people? No. Good to people? Oh, yeah. We would be good to them.

What else would we be to other people? To show that we are kind. Yeah. Olivia? Let them join in and join in. Yeah. So we let people join in and we share.

Yeah. Any other ones? So we've been kind and we're sharing with people. These are some of the things that we can do to show good fruit. So just like this packet of seeds doesn't quite show me what strawberries are.

You have to work at it to then show us what strawberries are. It's the same with our own lives. We have to be in God's word. So how many of you have Bibles? Maybe not with you, but at home. Do you all have a Bible at home?

[18:49] So if you've got a Bible at home, you can read that and that tells us how we can live in a way that shows fruit to other people. So we can be kind. If there's somebody in the playground that's maybe on their own and nobody's playing with them, as Olivia said, you can invite them in to play with you.

These are some of the things that we can do in our own lives to show fruit. Now sometimes we can forget. Sometimes we can forget to be kind. Are there times where you've maybe forgotten to be nice to somebody?

Yeah? I didn't look at you on purpose there, Emily. But there are times where we have forgotten to be nice to some people. It does happen. But who then steps in to help us?

Who can we ask to help us to show fruit when we sometimes don't? Jesus. Jesus. Jesus, yes. So if we pray and we ask for help to show that fruit, then we'll be given that fruit and we'll be able to then show it to others.

What things can you maybe do in Sunday school? This is a wee test. Hopefully the teachers will see the fruit of this. What things can you do in Sunday school to show good fruit?

[19:58] What can you do with these in Sunday school? Listen. Listen. What can you do with these? Keep them quiet. So when you're listening, you're taking in what the Sunday school teachers are saying.

You're listening to what God's Word is saying. And we don't talk, we don't talk to one another. We don't get distracted. So we need to listen to God's Word. And that will then help us to show fruit to other people. Last chance.

Does anybody want a strawberry? No? Are you sure? Okay. So I want you to remember that. When you see fruit, whether you see it on your tables, whether you see it in school, school, I want you to remember that that fruit didn't just happen.

It had to be, there had to be water. There had to be sunlight. There had to be a lot of work to get there. And for us as humans and you little kids in your Bible and praying will help you to show fruit to your friends and your family.

Well, we pray just now. Hands together. Eyes closed. Heavenly Father, Lord, we give you thanks that as we see even in these young ones, we do see the fruits.

[20:57] We see the fruits of the Spirit. We see their kindness. We see their generosity. We see it through Holiday Club. We see it through the clubs on Friday. And we pray, Lord, that they would remember that that fruit comes from you.

It comes from your Word. And we pray that they would be in that Word, that they would be in prayer, that they would be seeking to get to know you better and able to then share that kindness, to share that generosity and that love to other people.

And that just being a seed is not enough. Just being there is not enough. We have to be fruitful. We have to take in the nourishment that we see in your Word to be able to then share it with others and see them growing.

And to be able to then see disciples on the back of that, Lord. So we pray that as young ones go through to Sunday school, that they would get to know you better, to have a greater understanding of who you are, what you've done even in their young lives, and that they would grow in faith.

And in these early days, they would be turning to you, putting their trust in you and living a life that is pleasing to you, Lord. So be with all the young ones. Be with the teachers as they seek to impart your Word to the young ones this day as well, Lord.

[22:04] So forgive us for all of our sins. In Jesus' name. Amen. Okay, just before you guys go through to Sunday school, we will sing from Mission Praise 975. Mission Praise 975. We'll sing the whole of before the throne of God above.





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 vine dresser 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 It doesn't take a rocket scientist To know that we live in a world That's completely obsessed with current events Whether that's breaking news Or there's constantly a desire to refresh our feeds Find out something new What is the new information? What's the latest exciting story? The latest political scandal?

Or maybe even the latest disaster? There's a desire and a hunger for that In the world today And what we see here is that The first century world Was not entirely different in its nature And its desire For seeking out these tragedies And seeking to understand more about them And as we open our Bibles today In Luke chapter 13 The first five verses I've mentioned those I didn't read them again But what we see in those first five verses Is Jesus being confronted With the breaking news Really of his day People come to him reporting This horrific tragedy You read of those In those first five verses It's a tragedy where Pilate The Roman governor He slaughtered a group of Galileans In the middle of their worship And he's mingling their blood With their sacrifices And it's a gruesome And an almost terrifying reality Of what was going on At that time Yet in the minds of the people Speaking to Jesus They're making an assumption The assumption is Surely these people Who have suffered Who have suffered such a terrible fate Must have been worse sinners Than the rest of us Surely God was judging them For some secret evil in their lives But Jesus The master of diagnosing The human heart Immediately turns the tables On them Instead of offering them A straight explanation For that recent tragedy Explaining what had happened Instead What he does is He redirects his listener To a more profound And spiritual reality He directs the listener To their own human hearts He deliberately bypasses The debate over Who's worse Or who's sinned the most Or which sinners are worse He recognises that That's a distraction From the universal problem Of sin itself Human nature And I know I'm guilty of this We've all maybe been guilty of this Our nature is often To create A false sense of innocence In our own lives

[36:04] As we look to others As we look to other people's Transgressions We think Well there's no way That would happen to me Or I would never be quite as bad As that person over there But by refusing to listen To the specific offences Jesus forces his audience To confront their own accountability Rather than comparing themselves To other people In those first five verses of Luke Jesus really delivers a stark warning To the crowd that was listening He says Unless you repent You will all likewise perish He then references another tragedy The collapse of that tower In Siloam That killed 18 people And he repeats again The exact same warning to them Unless you repent You will all likewise perish!

So in just this short exchange He begins to dismantle Their idea of self-righteousness We are nowhere near as bad As those people He's telling them That the sudden disaster Is not a proof of someone else's wickedness But rather it's a warning Of the judgment that awaits Everyone who remains in rebellion Against God Then to illustrate that So the first five verses Really set the scene And then what he uses Is verses 6 through 9 Which we'll spend most of our time on To illustrate This urgent call For repentance And he highlights this There's a merciful delay In God's judgment Jesus tells this parable Of the barren fig tree In verses 6 through 9 And the parable As most parables In the Bible Really serve as a mirror for us So it's not something For us to look at And see this was an interesting story At the time We should really be using it As a mirror To ourselves Today And it should allow us To evaluate Our own spiritual output But always in the light Of the grace and time

That we've all been freely given I suppose the Kind of summary of What this passage tells us today Is that The fundamental issue That we face today Is the tendency To presume upon God's patience And grace While we may Be spiritually Barren We live in an era In an era Sorry That I heard in a podcast Being called Consumer Christianity So it's just a quick verse here It's a quick podcast there Maybe we come to church We sit in lovely Comfortable seats We enjoy the music We enjoy the praise We take notes Then we just go home We consume But we don't give We often consume God's resources Occupying a space In his church And in his world Without producing The fruit Of genuine repentance And an active faith We maybe mistake The delay of God's judgment For God's approval Of our lifestyle But the parable here As I said Is a mirror And it should shake us It should shake us awake From our spiritual slumber

And it calls us To each and individually Examine our own roots And our branches So for our time remaining I want us really Just to look at three points I'll run through All three points And then we'll just Go through them In a little bit more detail The first of which Is that there's an expectation Of fruitfulness There's an expectation Of fruitfulness Then we'll move on To the reality Of judgment There is judgment It's not something That any of us Can avoid And then the final point We'll just focus on Is the voice of intercession That we see Throughout this parable So it's quite neatly Written out The parable We have these three Specific things To focus on So we'll just maybe Work our way through Each of them individually Starting off with This expectation Of fruitfulness Just like the young ones When they see the picture Of the seeds of strawberries There's an expectation That strawberries would come If you plant this Maybe not in some Climates here But in certain places If you plant the seed There is an expectation That strawberries will come Eventually So let's just look at this First verse here Or verse 6 Of this parable And he told this parable A man had a fig tree Planted in his vineyard And he came seeking fruit on it And found none First thing to notice In that verse Is the setting This is not a wild fig tree This is not a fig tree Out in the middle Of an open space That's growing haphazardly By the side of a road I was reminded Just this last week If you're on the road Ever from Tarbert To Cailis Or to Carrague It'd be great to go Further to Cailis But if you're ever Just driving in that direction You'll see just down At the lochs There's a wee tree And Anna noticed it On the hill She said why is that tree Just on the lochs On the right hand side There's just this one Solitary tree And I remember asking Why is that there I thought A daft question I don't know But it came to my mind As I was preparing this Because that is not The picture that we see here This is not just A random tree Like we would see Across the road No this tree

[40 : 55] Was deliberately And purposefully planted In a vineyard Or told that it's a vineyard And in the ancient Near east at the time A vineyard was very much Prime real estate The soil was cultivated The stones were cleared away There was a wall Built for protection And even the best water Would be rooted to it For its growth For a fig tree To be planted in a vineyard Was an incredible act Of favour And the application For us today Is that We might not be In a vineyard But we must understand That God is the owner Of this vineyard Where we are And being planted in it Is a privilege For us as well If you're sitting here Hearing the gospel today If you have a bible In your hands If you're a visitor Maybe even a part Of your own church If you're a member Of your own church You are a fig tree Planted in the vineyard You've been given Extra ordinary privileges You're not one Just wandering in the desert You're not like that tree On the way to Kylas

It's just solely Sat beside the loch No you've been planted In the rich soil Of God's covenant community But with those Great privileges Come great expectation And the man Who owns this vineyard Who we know to be God Seeks fruit We see it in that First verse there Verse 6 He comes seeking fruit He did not come Admiring the leaves He didn't come to marvel At the thickness Of the branches Or to see how nice And straight the trunk was No he came for figs He came to consider It's fruit And that's the reality For us God rightly Expects his people To produce spiritual fruit Whether that's obedience Repentance Love Being just Being kind As the young ones Were sharing with us You don't have to Be a rocket scientist To see the young ones Can share with us What good fruit looks like And that's ultimately Commensurate with our position In his vineyard But the question

You may be asking Is what does that fruit Look like And the New Testament Gives us Significant opportunities To read and understand What fruit bearing is In Matthew 3 John the Baptist Tells the Pharisees And the Sadducees To bear fruit In keeping with repentance Galatians 5 Probably the most well known Apostle Paul Describes the fruit Of the spirit As love Joy Peace Patience Kindness Goodness Faithfulness Gentleness And self-control These are all things We're not going to go into The fruit of the spirit But these are all things That are visible These aren't things That just happen In a cupboard Hidden away These are things That are visible They're tangible Outward manifestation Of our inward Transformation It's the evidence Of life And we need to be Showing that evidence Of life The golden rule Sorry The Yeah the golden rule Tells us Do to others Not don't do to others It would be easy for us Not to do certain things To people We could just close the doors Close our windows

Blinds down And just make sure That we don't do anything To anyone else But we're told to go And to do Same with the great commission We're to go We're not to stay We're to go And it's visible Like we spoke about With the young ones That seed That I had If I planted it It would produce

strawberries In the same way A believer Ought to produce Godliness And this really brings us Really a piercing reminder For those of us That are sat here in church Or maybe listening at home Who are maybe Comfortable believers I think we live in a Very comfortable place To be a Christian It's not the same Across the world We've got friends In our own congregation That have not long Departed from us To work in a very difficult Different kind of vineyard So this text itself Is a call to deep Self-examination And it's something That we ought to be doing Anyway But especially before We come to the Lord's table In a couple of weeks Are we merely occupying a seat Or are we actively Bearing fruit for the Lord It's entirely possible

To have the appearance of life To look like you're active To maybe have the green leaves Of your church attendance Maybe the strong roots Of a good biblical understanding If somebody was to ask you A question at the door You would have the answer Like that Maybe the branches Are being respected In the church But to be entirely barren At the same time Actually giving No life-giving fruit Do you love your enemies?

[45 : 25] Are you generous With your time? Are you generous With your time for the church? Do you use your talents That God has given you For his glory? Or do you use it For your own glory? Are you even repenting Of the private sins In your own life That the rest of us Don't get to see?

Is there a growing affection For Christ In your heart That overflows Into how you treat others How you treat your spouse How you treat your children How you treat your co-workers How you treat the poor In our community True saving faith Naturally and necessarily Produces tangible And visible evidence Of that transformation We're not saved by our fruits We're saved by grace alone Through Christ alone Through faith alone In Christ alone But the faith that justifies Is never alone It should always bring forth fruit Just think of our Church layout today You can almost imagine it As a vineyard We've got neatly set out chairs Often doesn't happen When teas and coffees are served But at the moment The chairs have been set out They've been set neatly in rows They've been intentionally laid out For you to sit And to hear the word And you can just imagine As we read this parable The master walking

Amongst the chairs Much like he would Walking amongst a vineyard Examining the branches Of our own lives What does he find As he walks amongst us today?

What does he find As he looks at you Today? Does he see fruit? Or is he observing A barren tree Today? So point one really Is that expectation Of fruitfulness There's an expectation That the master sees fruit Which really leads us on To the second point Which is the reality Of judgment The narrative Of the parable Takes a dark And sobering turn In verse 7 Let's just read What the master Says himself In verse 7 And he said To the vine dresser This is the master He said to the vine dresser 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?

For three years now I have come seeking fruit The master says This isn't a snap judgment This isn't a sudden Fit of rage From this This master of the vineyard This isn't some Impulsive land owner This is a long Patient Repeated pursuit For fruit For three agricultural cycles He walked down The rows of the vineyard He saw the tree He checked the branches He waited He returned Time and time again He was met with Nothing but barrenness This verse establishes The reality of divine justice And accountability Yes God Is immensely patient But God's patience Has a limit There comes a day When that period of probation Will come to an end The owner points out A very practical reality Why should it use up The ground?

[48 : 33] A barren tree Is not just useless It's actively harmful It drinks up the water It absorbs the nutrients From the soil And maybe even Cast a shade Over some of the Surrounding plants All while offering Nothing in return That continued Spiritual barrenness Wastes God's resources And ultimately invites A righteous judgment From him How many nominal Christians Are doing exactly this today?

By nominal Christian I mean those who identify As Christian Really in name only Rather than through Personal conviction Or the fruits Of what they do Maybe they sit in church Hear the word every week Yet year after year There is no change There is no repentance There is no holiness In their lives God is not mocked By empty Religious affiliation Without substance Maybe a baptism From 20, 40, 50 years ago Your name on church Membership roll Or maybe a family tradition Of attending certain services Maybe the watch night service That's the one we go to None of these things Will stay the acts Of divine justice Cut it down The master says The demand of justice Is complete removal Doesn't say cut it back Doesn't say get rid of Some of these branches And

maybe put it in another Part of the vineyard Maybe it will grow there No he says cut it down And I suppose the message Today really is Something for For the nominal Christian For those that are Maybe not yet Christian Here today Those that maybe Be trusting in Past decisions Rather than a present Reality of their faith Please note that This text serves As a severe warning Against our spiritual Sluggishness And I speak to myself First and foremost We have an incredibly Dangerous habit Of misinterpreting The providence of God When we're living In unrepentant sin Or when we're living Entirely for ourselves And ignoring The kingdom of God Yet our lives Are going well Maybe our Bank accounts Are nice and healthy Our physical health Is good Our careers Are advancing We maybe assume That God's actually Okay with the way We're living our lives But we mistake God's current silence Or delaying his judgment As approval For our current lives But Romans 2 4 warns us Or do you presume On the riches Of his kindness And forbearance And patience Not knowing That God's kindness

Is meant to lead To your repentance If the axe has not Fallen on your life yet It's not because God doesn't care About your fruitfulness It's because He is terrifyingly patient But don't be deceived A fruitless life Is in imminent danger Of being cut down The axe is already laid At the root Of the trees Every day that passes Without true repentance Is a day closer To the reality Of a final judgment God's justice Should be a terrifying prospect To the barren soul Among us If you bear no fruit Then he says Cut it down This is the reality Of judgment That is laid Before us today So we see that Expectation of fruitfulness We then see the reality Of judgment And I want to spend A wee bit more time At our wonderful Hope filled Third point Which is the voice Of intercession Just as that axe Is about to swing Just as that sentence Of judgment Is pronounced Over this barren fig tree A new voice Enters the parable It's a wonderful Beautiful Compassionate Voice of mediation Read verses 8 and 9 With me Of this parable And he answered him That's the vine dresser 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 So who is this Vine dresser Well The vine dresser Represents Christ Christ is the one Who steps in Between that righteous Judgment of the father And the barrenness Of the sinner He intercedes For mercy And he asks For a temporary Stay Of execution Hear the plea

[53:05] Of the saviour Let it alone This year also But notice carefully The nature Of this intercession He doesn't say Let it alone forever It's fine just the way it is It's done a really good job He doesn't lower The standard of this vineyard He doesn't lower The standard Of the master He says master Doesn't say master Don't worry about the fruit Leaves are enough Or I know this branch Doesn't look great But it's strong enough No Like our first point The vine dresser himself Has an expectation Of fruit That expectation Of fruit Remains absolute With the one Who intercedes As much as it does For the master himself Instead The vine dresser here Asks for an extension Of time So he wants time Coupled with Intensive Agonising care This extended time That we have Or has been Mediated for us It's not a time For illness It's not a time

To just procrastinate But it's an active Season of grace Where the vine dresser Nourishes The roots To provoke Repentance He says there Until I dig around And put on manure I want you to sit With that image For a moment Now I'm no gardener I know Joyce is to my right I'm not going to look But if you drive past Seven Kylas You'll know I'm no gardener But the image here Is of Dirty Messy Backbreaking Work The vine dresser Is taking a shovel To the hard Compacted soil Around the roots Of this tree He's breaking the ground And then he's Applying manure He's doing everything Within his power To shock this tree Back to life He applies the word The spirit And possibly Church discipline Maybe To awaken the soul Often in our lives We wonder Why are we going through Deeply painful seasons In our life Why is God allowing The soil of my life To be dug up Why is my foundation

Been unsettled Why am I surrounded By difficult circumstances Surrounded by suffering Difficult relationships Financial stress Friends I want us to think Could this be our own Extra year That we've been given Could it be that you perceive What you perceive As an attack Is actually the desperate Merciful digging Of the vine dresser Digging of Jesus Christ Himself Trying to get the nutrients To your hardened Barren roots God loves you Too much To let you Comfortably perish In your fruitfulness He will dig around Your heart He will allow The stench filled Uncomfortable realities Of life To break your pride And drive you To your knees Of repentance If you're not A believer Today Or if you're a Christian Struggling with sin As we all do Then this message Is for you There's no one That this message Is not for This parable Is our lifeline If you're sitting

Here today And you recognise That your life Is entirely devoid Of spiritual life Yes you may be Come to church But out with that There is nothing Spiritual in your life Then I plead you To see The imminent danger Of the axe That is already Maybe laid At your roots Don't make the fatal Mistake of confusing God's merciful Delay of judgement With his approval Of your unbelief And I would urge you To turn from your barrenness Surrender your pride Which is maybe Keeping you From being spiritually Fruitful And run to the cross Of Christ Where the ultimate Price for your sin Was paid Please do this Before the window Of grace Closes forever For today Is the day Of salvation We can receive That grace Today We ought to recognise With trembling Awe That you may be Living in this Extra year Today Secured by Christ's intercession As a vine dresser Every breath you take Every morning

You wake up Every sermon You hear Is a gift Of grace Brought by The intercession Of Jesus Christ You did not Earn today I did not Earn today Today was given To us Because Jesus Stood before the Father and said Give them one more Day Let me work On their heart One more time But remember This season Is not indefinite The vine dresser Himself Acknowledges This limit He says Then If it should Bear fruit Next year Well and good But if not You can cut it Down That window Of opportunity In our lives Is closing Therefore We ought to Yield to the Nourishing work Of the Holy Spirit And turn to God Before this window Of grace Closes Stop fighting Against the shovel Stop complaining About the manure We ought to Let the sharp Edge of God's Word Break up The hardened Soil of our Hearts When you come And hear God's Word Drink deeply The gospel Cling to the

[58:08] Cross Where the ultimate Price of your Barrenness Was paid And let the Life of Christ Flow into your Dead branches As we draw to A close There's something Deeply unsettling About the way This parable Finishes It really is In a short Few verses A masterpiece Of storytelling Precisely because Of what it Leaves out You see there The parable Ends abruptly And open Endedly Without telling Us what Happened To this Fig tree Did it ever Bear fruit We don't get A neatly Wrapped Conclusion To this parable We don't get To read Verse 10 And see And then Next year The tree Brought Massive harvest And the master Rejoiced So why is it That Jesus Stops there Well the ending Of the story To this parable Is placed in the lap Of every listener Today When Jesus spoke These words To the crowd In the first century He was looking Them directly In the eyes

He was saying To them You are the tree And today We are the tree On the 13th of September 2026 In Tarbert We are the tree You and I The ending of the story Is being written By your response Right now And the exact same Is true for every Single one of us In this room today And every single One of us Listening online When you leave This service today Hopefully after tea If you are able To stay back You are giving Your response To the master Look at what He has done for you God has mercifully Stayed his hand Of judgment And actively Provided the cross Of Christ And the work Of the Holy Spirit To nourish us He has not left you Alone in your Barrenness The Father has Provided the time The Son provides That blood Bought intercession And the Spirit Is then providing The power To change you Every resource Of heaven Has been poured Out on the roots Of your life The terrifying Glorious

Urgent question Before us Is this We must ask Ourselves How will we Respond To this Final season Of grace Will we Continue to Consume the Blessings of God While refusing To yield Fruit Of a surrendered Life Will we walk Out these Doors today To our Comfortable Nominal Spiritual Barren Routines Assuming that We'll maybe Just have that One more year Maybe next Year I'll take Things seriously Or will the Voice of the Vine dresser Be the one Pleading with Our souls When he says In 2 Corinthians 6 Behold Now is a Favourable time Now is the Day of salvation Not tomorrow Not next year Now Today Is the day Of salvation Let us turn From our Barrenness Root ourselves Deeply In Christ And bear the Fruits That are expected By our Heavenly Father Don't leave Today By assuming That we've got More time For none of us

Are guaranteed To even see Into the rest Of this evening Let alone Tomorrow Amen And may the Lord bless Just his very Brief thoughts On this Short parable Say a word Of prayer Before we Close with Singing Heavenly Father Lord We come Before you As our Owner of our Vineyard We know you Are the one Who has set Us where We are That we've Been placed Here intentionally And there Is an Expectation That we Bear fruit Maybe we Today are Ones here Who have Sat before Your word We've maybe Soaked up Your blessings Your word Your patience And maybe We've given So little In return Lord We ask That you Would forgive Us for That And we Pray and Give

thanks For our Great intercessor That vine dresser Jesus Christ We give Him thanks For Stepping in And securing Us this Season of Grace And one Where the Holy Spirit Will work In us Take a Shovel to Our hearts We'll dig Around our Pride And all These things In our Lives That separate Us from A life That is Fruitful We ask Lord You would Apply Whatever is Necessary To the Roots Of our Lives That we Would be Transformed That we Would be Turning away From the Sin in our Lives That we Would not Just be Living a Comfortable Nominal Life But that We would Be actively Intentionally Bearing fruit For you Whether that Be in the Classroom Whether that Be in the Workplace Whether that Be as part Of the Congregation Here Whatever it Is that You have Laid before Us Give us Willing Hands To be Able to Share Your most Glorious Word With those Around us So we Pray that We would Be receptive To that Work being Done Receptive To that Digging up Of the Hardened Soil Of the Putting on Of manure Or whatever It may be In our Lives Lord We pray That we Would be Open to It That we Would be Receptive To it And that We would Be responding To the Wonderful work Of the Holy Spirit [63:11] In our Own lives Lord So be With us Just now Allow us To even Go away From this Place To read The surrounding Passages To read The same Passages Again And to Pray into It To pray As to where We are Each and Every one Of us Spiritually Are we Barren Are we Bearing Fruit For you Are there Are areas Of our Life Where we Ought to Make changes And make Changes that Would ultimately Give you All the Glory So be With us Just now Forgive us For all Of our Sins In Christ's Name we Pray Amen We will Conclude By singing Mission Praise 624 And this Is something That I Think we All ought To be Doing Especially In light Of this Parable That we Would not Just be Relying On the Things of Our own Life Or assuming That the Lord is Happy with A life That is Just Focused On self But that We would Be asking For our Life to Be Taken By the Lord So sing The whole Of this Hymn Take my Life And let It be Consecrated Lord To thee Take my Moments

And my Days Let them Flow In ceaseless Praise Take my Hands And let Them move At the Impulse Of thy Love Take my Feet And let Them be Swift And beautiful For thee Take my Voice And let Me sing Always Only For my King Take my Lips And let Them be Filled With Messages From thee Take my Silver And my Gold Not a Might Would I Withhold Take my Intellect And use Every Power As thou Shalt Choose Take my Will And make It thine It shall Be no Longer Mine Take my Heart It is Thine Own It shall Be thy Royal Throne Take my Love My Lord I Pour At Thy Feet Its Treasure Store Take Myself And I Will Be Ever Only All For thee So we'll Stand to Sing The whole Of this Hymn To God's Praise Take my Life Unlegged Be Consecrated Lord To The Take My Moments And My Days Let Them Flow In Ceaseless Grace Take My Hands Let Them Move To Impulse Of Thy Love Take My Feet And Let Be Swift And Beautiful For The Take My Voice And Let Me Sing Always Only For My King Take My Lips And Let Them Be Felt With Messages From The Take My Silver And My Gold Not A White Could I With Take My Will And Make It Shall Be No Long Thou Take My Will And Make It Thine It Shall Be No Long Thou Mine Take My Heart Is Thy Own It Shall Be Thy Royal Thore Take My Love My Lord I For At Thy Feet In Treasure Take Myself And I Will Be Ever Only All For The The The The Jude Who Able To Keep You From The Only God Our Savior Through Jesus Christ Our Lord