

**Sunday Sermon Review: Week of September 12th, 2021**

**Sermon Series: Parables**

**Sermon: Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13:6-9)**

**Speaker: Pastor Mike Burnette**

## **Icebreaker Question**

- What is something that you started but stopped doing after you weren't seeing any results?

## **Session 4 Suggested Questions**

- Do you identify more with the owner of the vineyard, the fig tree, or the vinedresser (the one tending the fig tree)? Why is that?
- Name some things in your life that have been difficult and require perseverance. Why is it difficult to keep working at something when there seems to be no reward or progress?
- What fruit is God currently producing in your life? What fruit would others say you are producing? Where do you feel barren?
- What does the word "repentance" mean to you?
- Share a time where you were able to see the best in a situation even though the worst was staring you in the face. How did you do it?
- Is it ever ok to "dig up a tree," or give up, and move on? How do you decide when it's time?
- Has there been a time when you planted a seed and did not see its fruit until much later in the future? Describe your waiting process.
- Do we all bear fruit immediately when we accept Christ? Why might someone have trouble producing good fruit right away?
- Let's read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. What race are you running?

- Who in your life stands up for you, defends you, and cultivates you in your journey to follow Christ? Who has God put on your heart to do the same for? Are you doing it?
- What are you doing right now to discipline yourself to produce good fruit?

## **Act On It**

**Encourage:** It's normal for us to get frustrated, want to throw in the towel, and chop down that useless tree. What a blessing it is that what we see as useless, Jesus sees as precious. Once we decide to be rooted in Christ, it takes an investment of time, effort, and resources, just like with everything else that we want to achieve. God wants to cultivate and grow us, but it takes time, which is why we must choose to be faithful and willing. Be faithful to the process and be willing to join the mission of God. Remember our call to faithfulness as you're working and serving with others, too. Don't give up because you're not seeing the results you want in the timeframe that you want. Keep going, work hard, and be faithful to the goodness of God.

**Ask:** Pray for a spirit of patience and perseverance. Pray for opportunities to extend God's grace and mercy. Ask to be given eyes and a heart that allows you to see and love people/situations as God desires. Ask God to show you the areas in your life that are fruitful and the areas that are barren. Is there anything in your life that needs to be pruned? Ask God to show the changes that you need to make to experience full fruitfulness. Pray for God to show you who in your life needs a little more cultivating and to show you how to do it.

**Challenge:** That thing, person, or situation that you're thinking about letting go because you haven't seen any results, give it a little longer. Commit to praying over it for the next week. Be faithful in being God's presence by regularly attending church on Sundays. Commit to doing life with your small group members, not just on the days that you meet. Stay faithful in serving

others no matter what it may cost you. Be faithful with growing your understanding and relationship with God by reading scripture. Be faithful in the Lord as your provider in your generosity.

## **Prayer Request and Prayer**

Lord, thank you for planting us. We thank you for your patience and the time that you give us to make changes and bear fruit. Help us find comfort in knowing that you're always tending to us and you're aware of our condition. Prune us and remove the things in our lives that may be leading to our own barrenness. Give us strength, patience, and perseverance to keep moving forward in faithfulness. Protect our hearts from discouragement when things don't look a certain way or happen at a certain time, and fill us with gratefulness. Give us eyes, ears, and hearts to see and love people and situations as you do. Help us trust in your timing and be at peace with knowing that you are in control. Help us to see the goodness that exists even when the worst is staring back at us. We love you, we trust you, and desire to seek you in all that we do. Amen.

**Sunday Sermon Review: Week of September 5th, 2021**

**Sermon Series: Parables**

**Sermon: Counting the Cost (Luke 14:25-33)**

**Speaker: Pastor Wayne Francis**

## **Icebreaker Question**

- What is your favorite item or thing you've paid for so far this year and why?

## **Session 3 Suggested Questions**

- Do people who know you know what your priorities are? Are your actions showing what you believe? Are your actions speaking louder than your words in reflecting what your faith, priorities, and sacrifices are?
- What has your walk with Jesus cost you? Have you lost anything/anyone? How do you cope with this loss?
- What is the cost of giving up your walk with Jesus? What do you think you would be losing? Do you know someone who gave up because they counted the cost?
- How does your love for God affect how you love others?
- Why is it harder to love a God that you can't see than people that you see every day?
- Why do you think Jesus calls us to love Him over our family?
- James 2:19 tells us that even demons believe in God, yet they tremble. What's the difference between believing in Jesus, and following Him?

- If you've said yes to following Jesus, what areas of your life do you still need to surrender to really go ALL IN?
- What makes it so difficult for you personally to go ALL IN?
- If someone looked at your life, would they be able to tell that you're a follower of Jesus?

## Act On It

**Encourage:** It costs us nothing to receive salvation, and it will cost us everything to follow Jesus. But when our love for and relationship with Christ is so strong, those costs no longer matter. In the beginning, it may feel hard to give up your free time, those friends, that extra money, but eternal living is so much more valuable. What was once something that we couldn't imagine doing life without becomes a thing of the past. Make God your first and greatest love, that's where it all starts. Paying those costs won't matter if we're living out of the overflow of our love for God.

**Ask:** Ask the Lord to show you the areas of your life that you still need to surrender to truly go "All In." Pray for the power and courage to pay whatever cost(s) needed in your life to start following Jesus. Pray for comfort and the peace that surpasses all understanding to surround you during this process.

**Challenge:** Figure out which cost you need to start paying this week in order to follow Jesus. Take some time and write out the areas of your life that you have completely turned over to God versus the areas of your life that still belong to you. Find someone in your life that can join you in prayer this week: Pray for the strength to keep the areas you've surrendered already in God's hands and pray for the difficulties that are keeping you from surrendering the rest. Enlist this person or find someone in the group that will be a great accountability partner for you along this journey, who

will encourage you, pray for you, and keep you focused on the mission - to become a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ.

## **Prayer Request and Prayer**

Lord, thank you for the price that you paid for our sins. Thank you for making it possible to live a life as a follower of Christ. We want to be your disciples. Help us find peace in knowing that there are costs that are required of us when we follow Jesus. Lord, may our love for you take the lead in our lives, help us to make everything else second place to you. Remove all barriers in the way of us living lives in relationship with you. Give us sacrificial hearts so that we can let go of the things that gave us temporary comfort and receive your eternal blessings. Help us to willingly hand over every area of our lives so we can be transformed in your image. We pray for your strength and grace because we can't do it on our own. We pray for your comfort and peace as we make these changes because it will not be easy, but we know it will be worth it.

**Sunday Sermon Review: Week of August 29th, 2021**

**Sermon Series: Parables**

**Sermon: Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)**

**Speaker: Pastor Mike Burnette**

## **Icebreaker Question**

- What is the last random act of kindness that you received from someone? What made it memorable for you?

## **Session 2 Suggested Questions**

- Which character in the story are you:
  - The Robber says, “What’s yours is mine, and I’m going to take it.” You’ve used your words to hurt people and take what is not yours. You’ve lived with the attitude that what belongs to others is yours and you will take it for self-gain at all costs.
  - The Religious priest or Levite says, “What’s mine is mine, and I’m going to keep it.” You’ve been caught up in doing good and serving God that you’ve forgotten to serve the hurting and the lost. You’ve looked and worked the part, but you’ve overlooked the marginalized and, unknowingly, your attitude has shifted towards what’s mine is mine and I will keep it.
  - The Samaritan says, “What’s mine is yours, and you can have it.” You’re willing to cross over the road to help the wounded. You have come to the realization that you are God’s currency and he can use you at his pleasure. You give what’s yours to others.
- Who do you truly act neighborly to in your life?
- Who is someone you’ve told yourself that you could never love? Someone you may have made into an enemy or outsider in your life?

- Looking from the perspective of the wounded man, how do you think each encounter in his time of need affected his faith and trust? What do you think he was thinking when the Samaritan helped him?
- Share a time where you went out of your way to help someone in need. What cost did you pay to make this happen (time, money, resources, etc.), and why was it worth it?
- If you treated your enemies like your family, how would things change? How would the new charge to “go and do likewise” toward them change you?
- Take a moment and read Matthew 5:43-48. How do your actions measure up to the call Jesus has for you?
- What’s your attitude towards getting involved in mission trips, serve projects, or any other serving opportunities to help others? Do you feel qualified to do this? Why or why not?
- What costs are stopping you from serving someone? What would it look like for you to fully pursue the call to love others?

## **Act On It**

**Encourage:** Just as God loves people unconditionally, we need to love people unconditionally. God knows that we have free will and that we have preferences, but when we choose to become followers of Christ, we’re called to live in a way that honors what He wants over what we want. When we choose to love God, we’re choosing to love his people, too. This isn’t meant to be easy, there will always be a cost associated with serving others. It may cost you your level of comfort to which you’ve become accustomed, your money, time out of your busy schedule, or a resource, but the reward of showing the heart of God to others is worth so much more. We live in a world filled with an abundance of needs, and God needs us to stretch and go out of our way to help them be met. Listen to where God is calling you to serve and have faith that through His power and your obedience, you can make a difference.

**Ask:** Submit the areas where you've created preferences and barriers to serving others in your life to God in prayer. Ask Him to speak into those areas and help you renew your attitude towards serving others. Pray for The Lord to show you how you can use what He's given you to help show others the heart of God. Pray to be stretched beyond your comfort zone and to be shown who's the "neighbor" in your life that you can immediately start serving.

**Challenge:** Who is God putting on your heart right now to serve? Do it! If you see a need in your community, write out some ways that you can help, no matter how big or small. Offer to take a task off of someone's plate this week. As you're running errands, stop and ask someone how you can pray for them and do it right then and there. Is there someone in your family or friend circle that needs to feel and see the mercy of God? Ask God to show you who you need to serve, listen for the answer, and be obedient. See a need, own it, and move!

## **Prayer Request and Prayer**

Lord, thank you for showing us how to love unconditionally and giving us the example of how you want us to love the people around us. As we move on in our week, help us remember the Good Samaritan in this passage and your call to always be a good neighbor, even when it's inconvenient. Ignite our hearts with the desire to serve others. Remind us that we get the opportunity to show love to others because you first showed love to us. Open our eyes and hearts to the needs around us and move us to meet them. Remove any and all barriers that stand in the way and keep us from showing your love to others. Help us in extending love and grace to everyone we meet so we can embrace everyone you place in our paths. Help us remember that all we have belongs to you so we can steward our blessings in a way that brings you honor and glory. Fill us with your love and empower us with your Spirit so that others can feel your grace and mercy and draw closer to you. Amen.

**Sunday Sermon Review: Week of August 22nd, 2021**

**Sermon Series: Parables**

**Sermon: Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)**

**Speaker: Pastor Mike Burnette**

## **Icebreaker Question**

- Have you ever lost or misplaced something that was super important to you? How did you react? When you found it, how did you feel?

## **Session 1 Suggested Questions**

- Which character in the story do you relate to more:
  - Are you like the younger brother - spoiled, taking for granted the blessings of God?
  - Are you like the older brother - envious of others getting blessed, and feeling like you have to earn God's grace?
  - Do you have the heart of the loving father - compassionate, kind, and quick to forgive - seeking those who are far from the family?
- Describe a time when you asked for something before you "deserved" it and later regretted it.
- If you were the prodigal son at a point in your life, how did you return back to God?
- Have you ever gotten jealous because someone got something that you wanted or was treated better than you? How do we turn our thoughts and feelings around so that we can celebrate instead of being jealous?
- What mistakes in your life do you believe are unforgivable? What makes you believe that God would not forgive you for this?

- What was your life like living without God compared to living with God?
- How have you tried to earn your way to God? How have you tried to earn your way to a comfortable life?
- What does true repentance look like to you? What is keeping you from truly repenting and running back to God?

## **Act On It**

**Encourage:** Despite what's happened in our past, God is willing to forgive and restore us. When we're ready to come back home, He's ready to welcome us with open arms and a party. If God can forgive like that, why can't we? As followers of Christ, the same heart our Loving Father has for us - a heart of forgiveness, grace, and compassion - we get to extend to others. And we don't have to work for it! God loves us so much, we don't have to be perfect and we don't have to figure it all out before we receive His gift of eternal living. Be encouraged to move out of the mindset that we have to earn our gifts from God and move into building a relationship with Him. The ultimate sacrifice has been made on our behalf. Celebrate the blessings you have received by sharing it with others. Let's be willing to yearn for those far from Christ just like God yearns from us when we're away.

**Ask:** Ask God to show you which character in the story that you're resembling right now. Pray and repent for the things from God that you have taken for granted. Pray to be released from religious routines so you can experience the freedom in living a life with God instead of feeling like you have to earn your way. Pray for peace and comfort in knowing God loves you no matter what, and ask God to give you that same heart so you can extend that same grace and forgiveness to others. Finally, pray for eyes to see those who are far from Christ and for God to use you to pursue them and welcome them home.

**Challenge:** Think of people in your life who need to know that God loves them and is waiting to welcome them into His presence with open arms and a celebration! Connect with them for coffee or a meal this week so you can give them this good news!

## **Prayer Request**

Lord, we're so thankful that you have no limits. There is no distance that we could go where your love can't reach us. Through your love and by taking our place on the cross, you came and set us free from the things that separate us from you. Thank you for waiting, with open arms, for those who are lost to welcome them home. Lord, we repent and ask your forgiveness for the times where we were blind to your love and sought ways outside of what you desire for us. We repent for the times where we thought that we had to work to be in your presence and completely missed your heart to be in relationship with us. Thank you for never giving up on us. Remind us of your love, grace, and forgiveness so we can share it with others who are far from you. Give us a heart that yearns for the lost. Remove any obstacles currently in our lives that keeps us from sharing your good news with others. Place us where you can use us to help bring others home to you. Thank you for your goodness and your love. Amen.