LUKE 13

Unless You Repent

a fallen tower, a fruitless fig tree, a bent woman set free, and a narrow door that will not stay open

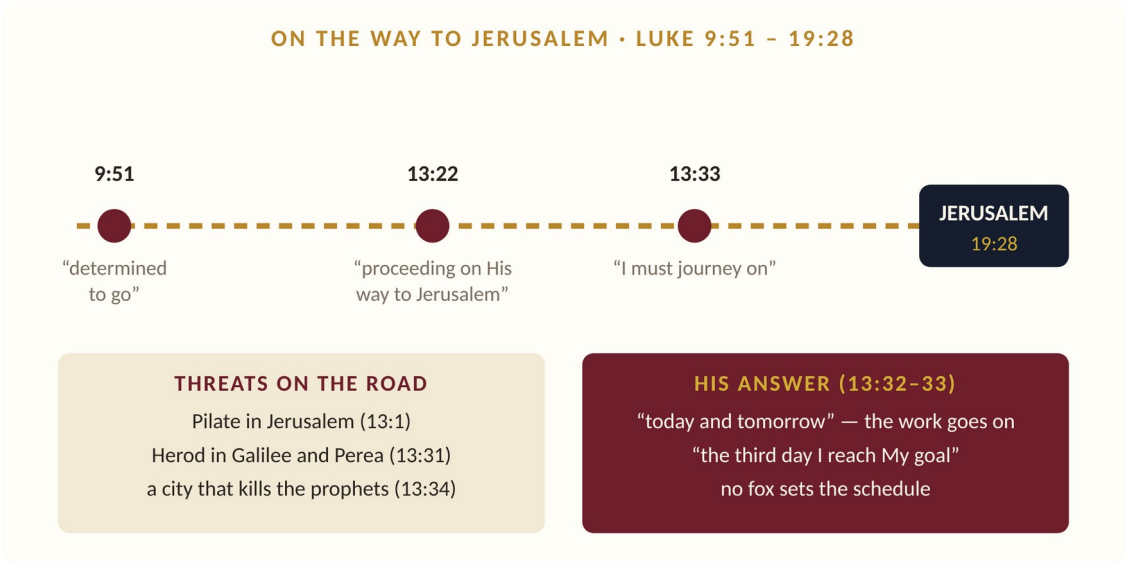
> *"Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able."*
> LUKE 13:24

Where we are in Luke

1. Luke 13 belongs to the long middle of Luke's Gospel, the journey that began when Jesus "was determined to go to Jerusalem" (9:51).

2. The two disasters in verses 1–5 are known only from Luke.

3. The Old Testament gives the pictures Jesus uses.



Unless You Repent

Galileans slaughtered at the altar, a tower falling in Siloam, and the question turned around

LUKE 13:1

Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

DAVID GUZIK

No secular record, but just like Pilate; repentance that keeps going.

R.C. SPROUL

Ask not why they died but why I was spared.

C.H. SPURGEON

Accidents are not punishments; ask whether you are ready to die.

MATTHEW HENRY

Sufferings do not measure sins; others' judgments call us to repent.

μετανοέω
METANOEŌ · "REPENT"

From meta (after, change) and noeō (to think): to change one's mind, and with it the direction of a life.

The Barren Fig Tree

Three years of looking, one more year of mercy, and an ending left open

LUKE 13:7

"And he said to the vineyard-keeper, 'Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?'

DAVID GUZIK

God looks for fruit; three years, then a second chance.

R.C. SPROUL

Fruit proves conversion; do not assume three more years.

C.H. SPURGEON

Felling is just; the axe is stayed because Christ pleads.

MATTHEW HENRY

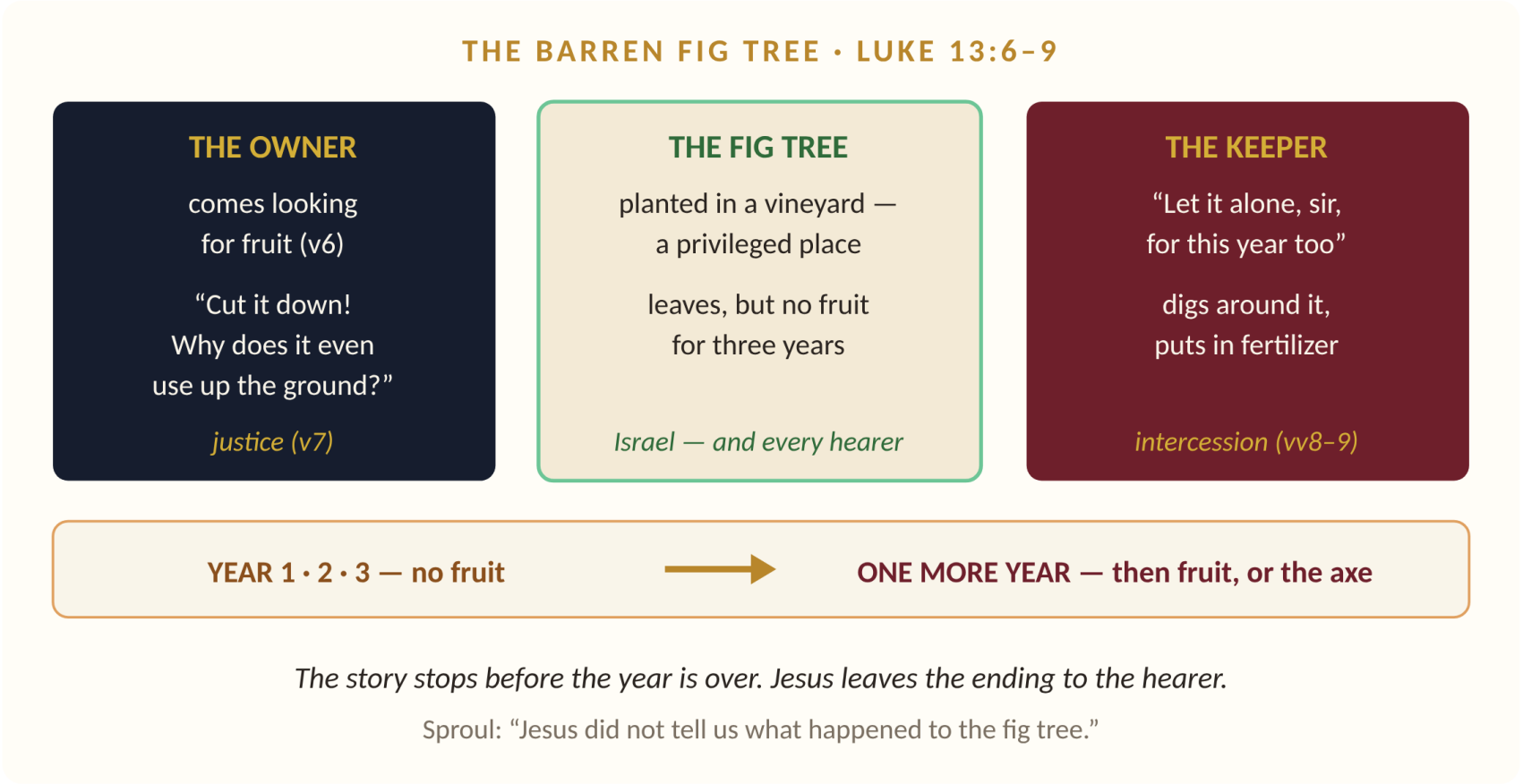
Ministers intercede, Christ intercedes; God takes no pleasure in cutting down.

συκῆ

SYKĒ · "FIG TREE"

A fig tree was the ordinary fruit tree of Israel's hills, and figs were a picture of the nation (Jeremiah 24; Hosea 9:10; Micah 7:1).

The barren fig tree



Three characters, three years and one more: notice that the story stops in the year of mercy, before anyone knows how it ends.

Loosed on the Sabbath

Eighteen years bent double, a word and a touch, and a ruler who cared more for the calendar

LUKE 13:16

"And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?"

DAVID GUZIK

Not every sickness is spiritual; help a person as you would an ox.

R.C. SPROUL

"Hypocrite!" — water your donkeys, but not heal a daughter?

C.H. SPURGEON

Satan ties knots we cannot untie; the deeper sorrow, the sweeter song.

MATTHEW HENRY

Christ is stronger than Satan; cures had grown cheap to the ruler.

συγκύπτω

SYNKYPTŌ · "BENT DOUBLE"

To bend together, to be bowed down completely; found only here in the New Testament.

A Mustard Seed and a Little Leaven

Two small things that grow — and two ways our teachers read them

LUKE 13:18

So He was saying, "What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it?

DAVID GUZIK

Unnatural tree, birds of evil, leaven of corruption.

R.C. SPROUL

Small beginnings, vast fruit — the kingdom will fill the world.

MATTHEW HENRY

A little thing that grows; by degrees the whole leavened.

κόκκος σινάπεως
KOKKOS SINAPEŌS · "MUSTARD SEED"

Kokkos is a grain or seed; sinapi is mustard.

The Narrow Door

“Are there just a few?” — strive to enter before the Master shuts the door

LUKE 13:24

“Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

DAVID GUZIK

He answers not “how many?” but “will you?”; Jesus is the door.

R.C. SPROUL

Strive is agony; once the door is shut no one opens it.

C.H. SPURGEON

Striving is more than seeking; pride, pet sins and delay keep men out.

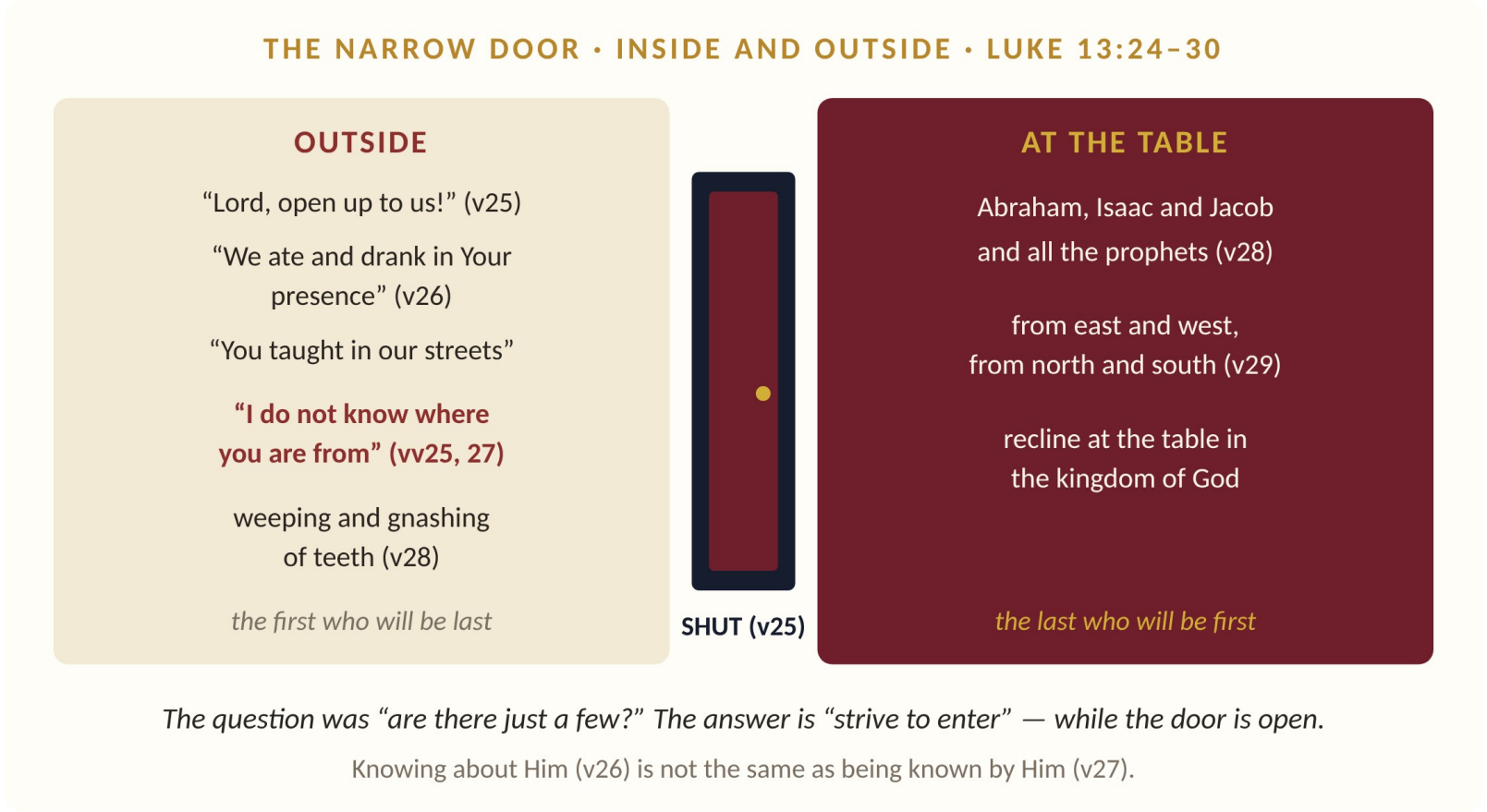
MATTHEW HENRY

An ill-grounded hope ruins many; the hell of hell is to depart from Christ.

ἀγωνίζομαι
AGŌNIZOMAI · “STRIVE”

To contend for a prize, to fight, to labor with all one’s strength — the athlete’s and the soldier’s word.

The narrow door



Compare the two sides of the shut door: the people outside claim familiarity with Jesus, while strangers from every direction sit with the patriarchs.

That Fox, and the City That Would Not

Herod's threat, the third day, and a hen's wings spread over Jerusalem

LUKE 13:34

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!

DAVID GUZIK

A cunning but weak ruler; Jesus finishes His work.

R.C. SPROUL

Some truth in the warning; unwilling, and unable without grace.

MATTHEW HENRY

Prophets reprove princes; Christ's willingness aggravates our unwillingness.

ἀλώπηξ

ALŌPĒX · "FOX"

Three New Testament uses: the foxes that have holes (9:58; Matthew 8:20) and Herod here.

What to carry from this chapter

1

Jesus refuses to rank the dead.

The crowd wanted a moral for someone else's tragedy.

2

The right question is "Why not me?"

Sproul: "The question you should come to Me with is, 'Why wasn't I slaughtered along with the others?'" Every breath I take is mercy, not a debt God owes me.

3

Do not lie to make a point.

Spurgeon would not tell a grieving widow her husband died for being worse than others: "Brethren, I would not tell a lie to save a soul."

4

Repentance keeps going.

Guzik: "The verb tense in Luke 13:3 (unless you repent) described a continuing repentance."

More to carry

5

Mercy has a deadline.

One more year, with digging and fertilizer — and then fruit or the axe.

6

The barren tree is not harmless.

It “even” uses up the ground (katargeō) — taking what a fruitful tree could use.

7

Untie the ox — release the woman.

Jesus plays on lyō: you untie your animals on the Sabbath; should not a daughter of Abraham bound by Satan be released?

8

Small beginnings — but watch the leaven.

Sproul and Henry read growth: “Small beginnings yield great and vast fruit.”

Talk it through

1. When I hear about a tragedy, is my first thought about what “they” must have done — or about whether I am ready to meet God?

2. If the Owner came looking for fruit in my life this year, what would He find? What is the “digging and fertilizer” He has been putting around me?

3. The woman was bent double for eighteen years and still came to the synagogue. What has bent me over — and what would standing up straight look like?

4. Where have I cared more about rules, schedules or my own convenience than about a hurting person in front of me?

5. Am I seeking or striving? What would it look like to strive to enter the narrow door this week?

CLOSING

Luke 13 begins with headlines and ends with tears. Jesus will not let us judge the dead; He tells the living to turn while the year of mercy lasts and the door still stands open. The same Lord who straightened a bent woman in one touch still spreads His wings over sinners — come under them now.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study and reflection journal: see the Luke study page.