

Luke 13:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:

Analysis

Lord, let it alone this year also (κύριε, ἄφες αὐτὴν καὶ τοῦτο τὸ ἔτος, kyrie, aphe autēn kai touto to etos)—The vinedresser intercedes for mercy, promising **till I shall dig about it, and dung it** (σκάψω περὶ αὐτὴν καὶ βάλω κόπρια, skapsō peri autēn kai balō kopria). This intensive cultivation—aerating the soil and applying fertilizer—represents extraordinary divine effort to provoke repentance.

The vinedresser is Christ Himself, interceding for Israel and for every barren soul. His 'one more year' extends grace, but grace with accountability. The imagery of digging and fertilizing speaks of God's active work through trials, discipline, and fresh outpourings of truth to awaken spiritual life. This isn't passive tolerance but purposeful intervention—God doesn't merely wait for fruit, He works to produce it. Yet even divine cultivation doesn't guarantee response; the tree retains moral agency.

Historical Context

Palestinian vinedressers (ἀμπελουργός, ampelourgos) were skilled laborers responsible for maximizing vineyard productivity. Digging around trees loosened compacted soil to improve water and nutrient absorption. Manure (κόπρια) was the primary fertilizer in ancient agriculture. The practice described here—intensive last-resort care for a failing tree—was costly in labor and materials, illustrating the vinedresser's commitment. This parable was spoken as Jesus

approached Jerusalem, where He would make His final appeal to the nation through His death and resurrection.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How might God be 'digging and fertilizing' in your life through circumstances you find uncomfortable or unwelcome?
2. What does Christ's intercession for the barren tree reveal about His heart toward those who seem spiritually unresponsive?
3. How should the gift of 'one more year' affect your urgency about repentance and spiritual productivity?

Interlinear Text

ὁ	δὲ	ἀποκριθεὶς	λέγει	αὐτὴν	Κύριε	ἄφες	αὐτὴν	καὶ	
G3588	And	he answering	said	it	Lord	alone	it	also	
	G1161	G611	G3004	G846	G2962	G863	G846	G2532	
τοῦτο	τὸ	ἔτος	ἕως	ὅτου	σκάψω	περὶ	αὐτὴν	καὶ	βάλω
this	G3588	year	till	G3755	I shall dig	about	it	also	dung
G5124		G2094	G2193		G4626	G4012	G846	G2532	G906
κόπριαν,									
G2874									

Additional Cross-References

2 Peter 3:9 (References Lord): The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Romans 11:14 (Parallel theme): If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

Romans 10:1 (Parallel theme): Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

Joel 2:17 (References Lord): Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?

Psalms 106:23 (Parallel theme): Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.

Jeremiah 18:20 (Parallel theme): Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them.

Jeremiah 15:1 (References Lord): Then said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.