

HOW TO PRODUCE UNDER PRESSURE

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Luke 13:1-9

What would you do if you only had 24 hours of life to live? If you could only take five books with you on a deserted island, which ones would you take? We don't tend to really focus on what matters most until our situation makes us do so. If we knew we only had 24 hours to live, we would try our best to make the most of the time we have left. 'What a difference a day makes.' There is a big difference between December 31st and January 1st. At the start of the New Year, we get to embrace new hopes and possibilities. It's like "Hakuna Matata" (No Worries). What happened last year needs to stay in the last year. What happened in the past should stay in the past and we should move on. With each new day and each new hour you get the chance to start out on a new slate. What shoulda, coulda, woulda, happen did not happen. Praise God for it anyway. Even when there are moments in your life when you are painfully aware that you are not measuring up, praise God anyway. Don't give up. Our sole purpose on earth is to glorify God with our worship, praise, and service. Each of us has an assignment that we were put here to do. No other person can complete your assignment. That puts us under pressure. You don't want to let God or your community down.

In the text, Luke tells the story of Jesus looking to a fig tree to remind us of the judgment and grace of God. Through the scriptures, you will notice that there was an ongoing conversation between Jesus and the people following him. Jesus wanted people to know that evil is everywhere. Tragedy is inexplicable. He wanted them to know that if they did not repent they too would perish. The time to make crucial decisions about your soul and your life is not during a crucial time. The time to think things through is not when you are going through something. The time to learn how to swim is not when you are pushed into the deep end of a pool. There will come a time when the window of opportunity comes open for you and you need to take it. Now that you are in 2007, you are feeling the need to make a creative contribution to the church and community. You are feeling the need in your own life to be more passionate, persistent, and productive. The tree in the text teaches us how to produce under pressure.

Some of us have been hiding out in the vineyard. The CEO has been walking around examining our productivity. God is about to make a recommendation on your life. The tree was in a competitive work environment. Out of all the trees in the vineyard was it was singled out because of its non-productivity. In today's mega churches, we think we can just sit out and hide in the vineyard. However, this text is showing us that God is looking at all the trees in the vineyard. When God comes through the vineyard known as the Ray of Hope, He can see your tree. The tree was noticed because of its non-productivity. The purpose of the tree was to provide fruit. It was not fulfilling its purpose although it was providing shade and oxygen. Whatever else you are doing in the world today may be good, necessary, and helpful. However, you have to also do what you are supposed to do. You are not doing what you are planted to do.

This tree was under pressure to produce. We don't know where we are in our year. Some of us are sitting up here acting like we are at our first year when we are really in our third year. You might even be in your year

of harvest. You should feel some pressure to produce. The owner of the vineyard has realistic expectations for the fig tree. What is God expecting of you this year. How do you know what kind of fruit you are supposed to produce? You may be a legal tree, praying tree, singing tree, or a preaching tree. Do what you are supposed to do. For three years, the tree didn't do a thing. The other trees carried the load. The owner doesn't make you go back in time. Instead, he gives the tree another year to produce. Just stop looking at what you didn't do, start producing right now. God is saying to you just produce now. Don't worry about your past or your failures; just make a contribution from this time forward.

What enables a tree to produce under pressure? The man who took care of the tree offered to help it grow fruit by digging around it and fertilizing it. We are going to have to learn how to grow in some sticky situations. We are going to have to learn how to be productive in a messy situation. People are talking about you. People are turning their backs on you. There is not time to move away. Thank God for what you are going through. The purpose of the things you are going through is to grow you. It's making, stretching, and maturing you. Thank God for your stinky situation. Jesus Christ, the supervisor of your vineyard, has interceded on your behalf. Jesus Christ has intervened between you and anybody that tries to stop you.

This could be your year, your moment, or your season to go higher and to make your contribution in the Lord. Somebody is going to have a great year and it might as well be you. Somebody is going to make a contribution and it might as well be you. Someone's dreams are going to come true and it might as well be yours. Somebody is going to break that curse and it might as well be you. Somebody is going to be saved and it might as well be you. Somebody is going to start that business and it might as well be you. Get ready to produce; you are under pressure.

Peace.