

How are we? We'll be in Luke 13 today. I told you last week that there are good things that can come with weight. Weighty things, heavy things, difficult things, there are really good things that can come out of that. There's transformation that can come out of that. So weighty things shouldn't be run from; instead they should be run towards, and you should try to excavate those things. And the reason I say that to you again is because I knew when I decided to preach through the book of Luke that there were two sections of this book that were unbelievably heavy, and we're in one of those sections now. Last week Jesus went over Jesus saying, "repent or perish," and now this week I think is even more difficult than last week, specifically if you've got any kind of church background.

So let's dive into this, and then we'll go from there. I'll catch you up to the story, because we skipped over the woman who was healed since we've already covered it. There is an argument going around some of the Pharisees trying to discredit Jesus as the Messiah. And their argument here is, "These things He's doing are very powerful, but they're not this kind of massive event that has to take place when the Messiah comes or when the kingdom of God comes." What they thought was that in an instant there would be some type of rebellion that overthrew Rome and established the kingdom of David again. And so they were expecting this kind of revolt that blew up and overthrew Rome. What they had was Jesus healing an old woman, so they're saying, "He can't be the Messiah. Look at how small that is." Now look at Jesus' response to this, starting in verse 18. "He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like?" He's addressing the argument before this that goes, "This is too small to be the kingdom." "And to what shall I compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches." And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened."" Now the weight of this text is this is what the kingdom is like, and there are two things I want to show you. I want to show you what this means historically, and then I want to show you what this means personally. So Israel at this time is waiting for this kind of cataclysmic, giant event that establishes the kingdom of God, and Jesus goes, "No, it's a mustard seed, but out of that mustard seed there will grow a tree so large that birds from every nation of the earth build nests in it."

So let's just talk about history. Don't see me as Evangelical preacher; see me as the guy who can go to the library and look up history books. Now the Bible tell us, if we're looking at it as a textbook and not as sacred literature, that at Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension there were 500 believers and Jesus throws out this command: "All authority has been given to Me. I give it to you. Go into Jerusalem, Judea and all the earth and make disciples of all nations." He gives the great commission. Now, the church responds by going, "Yeah!" and they go into Jerusalem and just hang out in Jerusalem. And then Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, tongues of fire fall on them and they begin to speak in tongues and we start to see these conversions, and now the church is at 3,000 in Jerusalem. So the Holy Spirit's like, "Go, go, go." And they answer, "No, no, no." So God kills Stephen. I don't know how else to throw that out to you, but that's what happened. The church was not going to leave Jerusalem, so Stephen stands up and preaches, there's this gnashing of teeth at what he says, and they kill Stephen and an uprising occurs in Jerusalem against the church. So what does the church do? They leave Jerusalem as missionaries. So now you've got it. From Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria. And then it just kind of stops again. Now during this period of time, so you're talking 40-60 A.D., Israel keeps picking a fight with Rome. That's never a good idea. So finally in 70 A.D., Rome grows tired of the nation of Israel and destroys, sacks Jerusalem. They lay siege to Jerusalem and blow that city out so badly that to this day you can still see markings certain walls and certain fields that were the siege laid on Jerusalem in 70 A.D. by the Romans. It was just a slaughter. And when

that happened Christianity was pushed out even farther. Now the Roman Empire these days is about 60 million people in size. Now let me give you some numbers as best we can gauge. In 100 A.D., it's estimated that there's around 17,500 Christians in the Roman Empire. By 180 A.D., there are 108,000 believers. By 250 A.D., there are 2.1 million believers in the Roman Empire. By 300 A.D., there are 6 million believers in the Roman Empire. By 312 A.D., there are 9 million believers in the Roman Empire. And by 350 A.D., it's estimated by most historians that there are 31.7 million Christians in the Roman Empire, 52% of Rome's population. Now here's the thing that starts happening that I think is kind of goofy. If you get around guys who know their history well and they're agnostics or atheists, they'll go, "Well, the reason Christianity fared so well in Rome is because Constantine made it Rome's official religion." But he didn't do that until after 312 A.D. Did Constantine make Christianity, or did Christianity make Constantine? It's a legitimate question. Can you imagine being a politician and you see this thing blowing up like wildfire all throughout the empire. Do you think maybe for your own head it would be a great idea to go, "Why don't we forget about Zeus? Jesus is great. I think we should all worship Jesus." Why? Because in a matter of 100 years, this thing had overtaken the empire. You betcha he converted to Christianity. And then it just keeps going. It just doesn't stop. You're talking from India to England, 60 million people, 52% of them Christians.

And then we could get into European history, but we just don't have the time for that. But you have the church that starts having all these splits. You have the Eastern Orthodox from the Catholics and you have the Protestant Reformation, and all that ends up with a group being persecuted. So they hopped on a boat and went to a place called "The New World." It wasn't new, it had been there all along, but to them it was new. So they bring their boat over and Christianity takes root and the United States is born. And then Christianity just saturates the U.S. And just so we can be honest, what started happening is, over a period of time in Europe, as the Enlightenment occurred, as technology advanced, the church started to dry up in Europe. Of course, I would contend that the Reformation took those who believed in grace and mercy and Scripture alone across the pond and left nothing but cold, dead orthodoxy if that in Europe. And the funny thing about religion is it doesn't last very long, not historically. Maybe a few hundred years. It just doesn't last very long.

And so you've got the world that we see now, but look at what's happening right now. As we speak right now, Christianity is absolutely exploding in Asia, particularly China. In fact, we worked with a group over there that was 10 million strong, one church. And you think we have space problems. Actually they can't gather without getting arrested, but that's mercy. Now, it's also blowing up in Africa and South America. So a seed went into the ground and it started growing. This happened. "The kingdom of God is like this. I've come to redeem. Remember Genesis 12, that through you, I'm going to bless all nations on earth." Here's the thing about the Scriptures. It's not just fables, it's happening. And then here's the thing I get a little giddy about. Everybody would point to Europe and go, "Since the Enlightenment and the advance of technology, that's everyone's future." Christianity only flourishes in developing nations, it does not develop where technology and enlightenment/education has occurred. And so thirty years ago, almost every secular philosopher you could find would say that to be true, but what started happening is there started to be pockets of revival in Europe. There are churches in London that are blowing up and men and women are getting saved in the hundreds and thousands. So now you would be hard pressed to find any legitimate secular philosopher who would tell you the future of the world is a religion-free world. It's not true. And so Jesus says, "Here's how the kingdom's going to work. It's going to start out as a tiny seed, it's going to go in the ground and before it's said and done, birds from every tongue, every tribe and every nation on this planet will worship Him."

Now, that's how it works out historically. Let's really quickly talk about how it works personally. I think you always have to be on guard for preachers. They're shady. I'm shady. We're all shady. We don't mean to be, but we just are. Like preachers will say things, because they're really passionate, they get all excited, but it just might not be true. Like I think we can all admit that we're not where we'd like to be spiritually. I would like to love Jesus more than I do. I would like to worship Him more passionately than I do. I'd like to understand more than I do. Can we agree? So what happens is

the preacher, depending on where he falls in Evangelicalism, will try to tap into that and take advantage of it. So the Pentecostals will say, "What you need is the second baptism. If you get the second baptism of the Holy Spirit, then that will go away and you will be all you were meant to be in Jesus Christ." And the Bible church people go, "Nuh-uh, what you need is to get a Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology book, and you need to sleep with it at night. You need to learn Greek. You need to embrace reformed theology." I tend to fall in this camp. And then you've got others who are part of a worship movement who are like, "You know what God wants? God just wants to be sung to. We have way too much preaching going on. We just need to sing, sing, sing, sing. God loves that." And then you've got others that are like, "No, it's missions. If we can just embrace the nations, then we'll get there." And everybody's got this one thing that, if you'll just do this one thing, it will finally all come together. But that's a lie, isn't it? I have a Wayne Grudem *Systematic Theology* book. I've been to China and Africa and Singapore. So here's the thing. It goes in as a seed and it grows. Sanctification, growing into maturity, growing into the fullness of Jesus Christ, it just moves slower than we want it to. Like it's not a four lane highway. It's more like a dirt path...and you ain't got no shoes on. It's just slower than we'd like to admit. We like to pretend that there's a combination that if you put it in right everything comes together. But that hasn't been true for so many people. Now some people get the miracle. Some people get the full on Holy Spirit shows up and shakes their hand. They just get it from day one, but that's just a real rare guy. So this is mustard seed/leaven, historically/personally.

Now the next part of this text is where it gets unbelievably difficult. Verse 22, "He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?"" So despite the fact that the last four chapters of Luke is Jesus attacking external religion as opposed to internal transformation, this guy's still doing it. "So are there just going to be a few of us?" If you ever doubt God's love and patience for you, just read the Bible. Seriously. You've got four straight chapters of "It's not external...it's not external...it's not external...it's internal...it's internal...you can do the law externally, but if you don't humble yourself and cry out in need of a Savior, there is no transformation." Despite four chapters of that, he's just like, "So is there just going to be a couple of us? Is this it? Is this our crew? Shame on the rest of these people." Now look at Jesus response, because this is where it gets to thick and heavy. And I'll even say it goes contrary to what most Evangelicals are learning and teaching. Jesus responds, "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last." So the guy asked the question, "Hey, is it just us? Is it just us who are journeying with You? Is it just us who are listening to Your teaching? Is it just us who are following You and eating dinner with You? Is it just us who are following You around, headed towards Jerusalem now?" And Jesus turns on him and says, "Some of you aren't even in."

In 1993 I was a senior in high school. I should have graduated in '92, but I really, really enjoyed the 8th grade. In 1993 I was a recent convert to Christianity and I flew up to Dallas for a conference and met up with some friends. We went out to eat at a well known steakhouse in Dallas. So we're at dinner, they're facing the restaurant and I'm facing the wall. We're just eating our steak, just talking life. They were instrumental in my conversion. If you're a non-believer, I always pray you have guys like this in your life. When I was lost, they really would answer my questions. They wouldn't just give me that cheap "You just have to have faith." They would go, "Well, let me show you this historically...Okay, let me tell you what you're believing in its place." They would always expose that I had more flaws in my thinking than they had in theirs. I was grateful for those guys. One of them actually planted a church in Ireland and is preaching there in Ireland.

Anyhow, we're sitting there eating steak, and I can tell by their faces that something changed in the room, but I don't know because I'm staring at some painting on the wall. So I turn around, and a group of people had walked in and had sat down at the table directly behind us, and one of those guys was Troy Aikman. Now here's what you've got to realize. This was not 2008 Troy Aikman, this was 1993 Troy Aikman. This is not Darth Vader, more machine than man, this is "I'm winning Super Bowls" Troy Aikman. So the whole restaurant catches this whole buzz to it, and I just start talking smack. I'm like, "Look, if he gets up, I'm going to tackle him." So I'm talking noise, hoping that he doesn't hear me. I grew up in the Bay Area, so I am not a Cowboys fan. And back in those days, there was this huge battle between the 49ers and the Cowboys every year. It was like an NFC title game every year. And I was a huge football fan, and here's Troy Aikman right here. As I walked out of the restaurant, my mom called just to make sure I got to Dallas alright, she actually still does that. She's like, "What are you doing?" I'm like, "You know, having dinner with Troy Aikman. What are you doing? I'm at a little steak joint, having dinner with Troy Aikman. Maybe you've heard of him. He plays quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys." Here's the thing about Troy. I'm not a Cowboys fan, but I could tell you a lot about Troy Aikman. I know he played high school ball in Oklahoma and went to the University of Oklahoma. And then he got injured and his backup took the starting role and he wasn't going to get it back. So he transferred to UCLA where he became the golden boy Troy Aikman. What a great nickname. I got "Alfalfa," he got "The Golden Boy." He sets all these records at UCLA and then from there is drafted by the Dallas Cowboys. He has a miserable first year. They went 1-15. In fact, if you want to know why he retired early, it's because of that first year. He just got blown up that first year. But they started putting together a squad. They drafted a running back out of the University of Florida, they got a wide receiver out of Thug U, otherwise known as Miami. They put together an offensive line that I could have run for 1,000 yards behind. This is the team they built, and they just started cranking Super Bowls. So I know a lot about Troy Aikman, but I don't know him. Like if I went to his house right now and was like, "Troy, whatup? 1993, Three Forks," I'm guessing I'm probably going to jail. I know a lot about him, but I don't know him.

I have this great and abiding fear in me, and I don't ever want the Lord to take it from me. My fear is that many of you in this place know God like I know Troy Aikman. And Jesus here goes, "That's inadequate. For you to know about Me, for you to be around what I do is inadequate." In fact, this isn't the only place He says this. It's everywhere. Go to Matthew 7. Starting in verse 21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." The will of the Father in heaven is not that you do a list of moral obligations. The will of the Father in heaven is that you would by faith believe in the cross of Christ as what reconciles you alone to Him. This is not moralistic deism. This is not "We do good so God likes us." That's not the will of the Father. If that was the will of the Father, He doesn't send Jesus to the cross, because the law was already written. "On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" Does anyone else find that text terrifying? "Did I not prophesy in Your name? Did I not cast out demons in Your name? Did I not do all kinds of miracles in Your name?" "Yeah, but notice what you're not saying there. So you do this, you do this, you do this, but you don't know Me. There's been no regeneration. You've been conformed to a pattern of religion, but you have not been transformed by the Holy Spirit. You have no affection for Me, no worship of Me, no desire to know Me, no submission to Me. You only have a list of things you have or haven't done."

Let's look at a couple more of these. Let's go to 1 Timothy 4. Starting in verse 1, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth." So what he's saying here is there's going to be these men and women in the church and around the church, who are a part of the church and you're going to consider them brothers, but there's going to be a time where the commands of God hit their lives they go, "No way I'm doing that." And they will instead embrace what he calls the doctrine of demons, something that looks right, something

that looks like it might be okay, but is away from orthodoxy. And they'll begin to chase that. And then look at what his command it to Timothy. Verse 16, "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers." So there's something about correct doctrine that reveals whether or not you truly believe or truly have a relationship or not. So doctrine is not a bad thing, it's a beautiful and necessary thing. And he knows Timothy very, very well and he says, "You had better guard your life and doctrine closely, because you might be one of the ones who's just near Him but not knowing Him."

Let's look at one more, although I believe you'd rather not. Let's go to Hebrews 6. We're going to pick it up in verse 1. "Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits. For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned." One of two things is happening in Hebrews 6. Either you can lose your salvation, and if you can, that means once you've lost it and you can never get it back. But that's not what this text says. It is, on the other side, telling the truth. And you can see in the three places we've been as well as other parts in the Bible that there are those who are partakers at some level in what is right and good, but in the end they're not believers in Jesus Christ. So the illustration, the parable at the end of this is what leads us to that, because he says, "There are two fields, they both get rain, one produces thistles, one produces fruit." He does not say, "One field got rain, produced fruit and then, out of nowhere, thorns and thistles came up and choked it out." No, he says, "It gets rain and it produces thorns and thistles or it produces fruit." So you've got this idea that's everywhere in the text, everywhere in the New Testament that there are those who around Jesus, those who are around the church, there are those who have great attendance records, there are those who know about God who in the end God says, "I don't know you."

Go back to Luke 13, starting in verse 31. Verse 31 is how you know you've preached a good sermon. Here's what it says, "At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here..." That's how you know you're preaching the full counsel of God. You're not tickling ears if the crowd goes, "Uh, why don't you leave? I've got an idea. Why don't you take your Bible and get out of my face?" That's how you know you went full counsel. That's not the fullness of it though. ""Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course. Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.'" Did you hear what He just said? They said, "You had better get out of here, for Herod wants to kill you." He goes, "Herod's going to kill me, but not before I get to Jerusalem." Now look at what happens here. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' He's saying to them, "Why aren't you hearing this? Why are you choosing what you're choosing? Is this really what you want? Is not what you really want to say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,' and humble yourself before he coming Savior, the coming Messiah? Would you rather continue to fight for and work for and exhaust yourself, trying to achieve perfection in the law when you know it's impossible. Oh how I long to protect you, take care of you, ease your burden, put you under My wings, have you sit at My table, rest in Me." Because when regeneration takes place, it's very restful. Like when you finally understand that your acceptance is not based on your merit, but on the cross of Jesus Christ, that's such a warm place. It's not a perfect place. We still struggle. It's just a warm place. Because then you don't run from Him anymore, you run to Him. You've

got Jesus lamenting here. Church folk going, "Did I not prophesy? Did I not cast out demons? Did I not do this? Did I not go here? Did I not accomplish this?" And Jesus is going, "Who asked you to? Who asked you for all of that? Now there's sanctification that takes place after you know Me, but not before. You don't fix yourself to come to Me. You aren't that good of a fixer."

Do you know Him, or do you just know about Him? Because He warns that there are those who know about Him who in the end will pound on the door and He'll say, "Where are you coming from again?" Do you want to hear something even scarier about the context of Luke? After this chapter, He will not address Israel again, just His disciples. In essence, in this lament, He closes the door and spends the rest of His life preparing His disciples for what was to come. Do you know Him, or do you just know about Him? "Well how do I gauge that, Chandler?" I know it's a struggle, but there are objective evidences. Like there's affection for the Lord. There's hate for the sin in our life. All of these are objective evidences of the seal of the Holy Spirit, that we hate our sin, that we love Him, that there is worship in us at some level, that there is a desire to grow into deeper fellowship with Him, that prayer is a reality. Now I'm not saying that you wake up at 5:00AM and spend the first three hours of your day in prayer, but there is this "I need you," there is this "Give me strength here." Do you know Him, or do you just know about Him? And every time we get into a text like this, I always get flooded with e-mails the next week, "Do you really think it's wise to make people doubt their salvation?" Yes. What's the loving thing to do in light of this? To pretend it's not there? To talk with you about being good people? To make Jesus some kind of therapist in the heavens? Or to let the text read us?

Dell Steele, our former chairman of the elders, got up here my first year and gave this great testimony of how he had been in church forever and had actually been a deacon but wasn't saved. And he locked himself in a room and wrestled with the Lord and came to know the Lord in a powerful way and walked aisle and shook the hand of the pastor as a deacon. In our first baptism ceremony the majority said, "I grew up in church but never understood the gospel." In this place where knowledge of Jesus is so prevalent but passion and transformation is so rare, these texts should be haunting. God help us.

Let's pray, "Father, I thank You for our time together. I thank You for hard words and difficult sayings and the weight of Scripture. I thank You that You love us enough not to just leave us floundering out there, but that You like to bring clarity. So I pray for those of us who are around You but don't know You. I pray for those who know a lot about You but don't have any real relationship with You. I just pray that we would wrestle these things out and that we would find our hearts and minds crying out to You tonight for mercy and knowledge and wisdom. Help us. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."