

Divine and Holy Tensions

Luke: All Things New



Series Goal

That Mercy Hill Church would be made new as we follow the One who is making all things new!



Sermon Text

Luke 13:6-9



Big Idea

This text seems to indicate that there are what we might call divine and holy tensions within God Himself. God demands justice but desires to show mercy. He demands that the tree to be cut down, but desires to give it more care and time. These tensions find their resolution at the cross.

(1) Identifying the Tensions

In this parable, if I could put it bluntly, it seems we have God arguing, as it were, with God. What we have here is a dramatic and vivid picture of the tensions that exist within God Himself—between His justice and His mercy, His holiness and His grace, His righteousness and His patience. “Cut it down!” “Give it more time!”

(2) Tracing the Tensions

I suppose, if we’ve been reading our Bibles carefully through the years, such tensions should not come as a surprise to us. For, after all, God seems to attach these tensions to His very name. You remember, perhaps, when Moses asked YHWH to show him His glory, and we are told that God hides Moses in the cleft of a rock, descends in the cloud, passes before him, and proclaims His name: “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation” (Ex 34:6–7). Did you hear it? The tensions playing out within God Himself? “I am merciful and gracious, but I will by no means clear the guilty—I am just and holy. I demand justice, but I desire to show mercy.”

(3) Resolving the Tensions

God gives us Moses as a picture, a sign-post pointing us forward to yet another who will come and stand in the breach for the people of God—who, in the face of God’s justice will call for God’s mercy: Jesus. But, while Jesus is similar to Moses in many ways, here’s what makes Him so superior: Jesus will not only stand in the breach for His people, He will bring resolution to these tensions within God Himself. Moses could stand in the breach for God’s people and convince Him to *hold back* His wrath. But only Jesus could stand in the breach for God’s people and *drink it all down* on their behalf.

(4) Applying the Tensions

(1) He’s in the Dirt for Us

(2) So Let’s Get in the Dirt for Others

Reflection Questions



- Have you noticed tensions like these within God before? Where else have you seen such things in the Scriptures? How have you made sense of them?
- How does this parable convict you and even warn you? How does it comfort and encourage you? Strangely enough, I think it was designed to do both! If you were really to take His words to us here to heart, how might it change your week?
- Are there any in your life you have been ready to “cut off”? How come? What might it look like for you to get back in the dirt with Jesus and beg God for another year? How can you do Colossians 1:28-29 with this person?