

Lesson 1: A Tree is Known by its Fruit

Reference: **Please Read:** Matthew 7:15-23; 12:33-35; Luke 6:43-45

Theme: Cutting through all the Smoke Screens to Real and Authentic Christianity

Context: Jesus Getting Near to the End of His Sermon on the Mount to all the People

Introduction:

It takes time for fruit to appear, but the unmistakable nature of a tree will come forth eventually. The test of time is one of the best ways to prove fruit or the authenticity of people. Folks can only put up a show for so long. It's only a matter of time until their real intentions will be on display for all to see.

False Prophets and Teachers

The greatest threats to the early church was false teachers and prophets as it is for us today.

Question: "Can you think of any false teachers/prophets in the last few decades?"

- Wolves in sheep's clothing speaks of cunning and deceit to take advantage of others
- **Please Read:** Acts 20:25-31
- Leaders who are in authority and abuse their position for personal gain...
 - o I really feel sorry for them, because Jesus takes it personally
 - o **Ezekiel 34:1-16; Romans 16:17-18; 2 Peter 2:1-22 ; Jude 12-19**
- People being misled and deceived by false doctrines is a very serious matter
 - o **1 Timothy 4:16**

There are countless souls who have been led astray and/or offended and turned their back on God due to the careless actions of others. Romans 14:13, "*Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.*" We all influence others, our mandate is to take care of God's people- even the least of these who belong to Jesus.

John 21:14-17

This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead. When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

- Paul went out of his way to set an example of integrity for people to easily identify
- **Acts 20:34-35; 1 Cor. 11:1; 2 Cor. 12:14-18; Php. 3:17-19; 2 Th. 3:6-14; 2 Tim.3:10-15**
- Paul spoke the truth, to benefit others- **Gal. 4:12-18; 6:12-15; Ephesians 4:11-16**

Fruitless Trees are Cut Down

Matthew 7:19

Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

This is a stern warning and a simple reality that makes a division between the saved and the unsaved.

- In the parable of the weeds and wheat, weeds are worthless and are burned
 - o **Matthew 13:24-30**
- The fruit of our recreated, born again spirit is evidence of salvation- **Gal. 5:22-23**
- When we display the love of God in our hearts to others- **Romans 5:5; 1 John 3:9-24**
- We are connected to Jesus, the vine and we bear fruit accordingly- **John 15:1-17**
- The parable of the fruitless fig tree further drives this point home- **Luke 13:6-9**
- **Question:** "How is our spiritual fruit produced in our lives- **Galatians 5:22-23?**"

Hebrews 6:7-9, "Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned. Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case — things that accompany salvation."

Posers will be Exposed

Matthew 7:21-23

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

So Jesus is cutting through all the smoke and mirrors of human duplicity and hypocrisy; exposing religious appearances and a form of godliness without having a real conversion- new birth experience. **John 5:41-47; 2 Timothy 3:1-5.**

- So what is the will of the Father God for mankind? **John 5:19-30; 6:40; 1 John 5:11-13**
- It all centers around what we do with Jesus- **John 3:35-36; Hebrews 2:1-4**

John 6:28-29, "Then they asked him, 'What must we do to do the works God requires?' Jesus answered, 'the work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.'"

Isn't it amazing that prophesying, driving out demons and signs/wonders alone are not enough to validate an individual's salvation. The fruit of love in our lives is the true test!

2 Corinthians 13:5-7.

The enemy is able to reproduce some counterfeit miracles to deceive people, but his power is limited and can only go so far. So signs and wonders alone are not the true test of faith.

- **Exodus 7:10-13, 20-22; 8:6-7, 17-19; Acts 19:13-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10**
- In addition to manifestations of the Spirit, there must also be corresponding fruit
- Character and the love of God in demonstration- **1 Cor. 16:14; 2 Cor. 12:11-13**

Words Locate Us

- **Please Read: Matthew 12:33-37**
- The words that come out of our mouths locate us and set the landmarks of our lives
 - o **Numbers 13:26-33**
- We can locate where a person stands spiritually by just listening to them
- Our words give us away, to whether or not we are in faith or in fear

In order to change our vocabulary, we need to start hearing God's Word, which will renew our mind, and store the truth in our hearts. As a result, it will become second nature for us to speak God's Word throughout our lives.

- What is instinctive for us to do and say is based on what we have stored in our spirit
 - o Proverbs 23:7 (NKJV), "*As a man thinks in his heart so is he.*"
- We will not receive beyond what we say. If we say we can't, then we can't
- But if we say we can through Jesus according to the Word of God- can do all things

The reason the majority of Christians are weak even though they are earnest, is that they have never dared to make a confession of who they are in Jesus.

- **Question:** "What the confession of God's Word look like in our daily lives?"
- First, we must realize how God looks at us, and confess it!
- Then boldly confess what the Word declares we are in Christ Jesus- faith abounds
- Confession of God's Word puts angels to work- **Ps. 103:19-20; Heb. 1:13-14**

The reason faith is held in bondage for so many, is they have never dared to confess what God already says they are in Christ Jesus. Faith, then, grows with our confession of God's Word.