

He Maketh The Tree Good

Transforming Our Nature Through Jesus' Love

To you from the Gospel of Matthew. Please turn to Matthew chapter 7. I want us to look at what our Lord Jesus Christ upon us as hearers. You will see that Jesus images reference to a tree and its fruits twice. Once found in Matthew chapter 7 and again in Matthew 12. And one time he exposed his false teachers who beneath their sheep's clothing conceal the true nature of ravening wolves. Look with me to Matthew 7:18. This is Jesus speaking. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Now drop down to Matthew 7:20. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

What Jesus does here is give gives a very simple yet very practical test to everyone that calls himself a teacher and teaching and then living the life. Living the life according to what is taught. This is what Jesus is speaking about here. And through the life we can see if someone is saying something their life can expose fallacies or errors, wrong doctrine by matching what is said. This is the practical test. many of not just in the Christian space in the circle of those who are believers out in the world same thing applies how how does the public evaluate through systems through regulations the different measures this is how the world evaluates the one that's giving any kind of a message any kind of thing that is set in motion. Ultimately, as Christians, this might not be the same in the world's context, but in context of being a Christian, our life holds a lot of weight to what we say.

Our conduct and our character goes hand in hand. We may not see that in the world and we're not, but in a Christian's life, it means everything. Means everything. And so Jesus is speaking here in that context of the importance of our inner state is priority before our actions. Our inner state is a priority before our actions. Or another way of putting it, our behavior. Our behavior is reflected on what is what we say. What we say. Now Christ dows deeper with this connection. And he fundamentally deals with a heart issue. And we're going to see in the course of this sermon that I'm just going to put it out there, okay? As Christians, we're not going to be perfect in this. Why? I'm going to go into that, but just kind of put it out there. As Christians, we still struggle. We still deal with external temptations. We still deal with the complexity of our conscience. But the general truth is still the same. I want you to focus there first and then we'll go to our character. The general truth still holds true. What Jesus says that our inner state reflects our actions. So character precedes action. Proverbs 4:23 says this, "Out of the heart are the issues of life." Out of the heart are the issues of life. It's such a simple yet profound and very wise statement, isn't it? This very verse can transform every area of your life if you pay attention to what your heart is doing in any moment of your life. Paying attention to your heart despite its familiarity. We've heard it. You probably heard it. It confronts us with the idea that being is the initial step before the doing. Being is the initial step before the doing. The doing is a subsequent one to being your heart. But I want to introduce to you the great problem of every man. Matthew 12:33. Please turn to Matthew 12:33. And I'm going to just lift out a phrase from the Lord Jesus

Christ in the beginning half of verse 33. He says this, "Make the tree good." Make the tree good. This is a fundamental truth that Jesus speaks that it stems essentially that your actions, your good action stems from being a good person. Again highlighting the being initial step before the doing the subsequent one. So Christ articulates this using a metaphor as he often does. The tree representing our life. The tree representing our life and its fruit is the actions of our life. The fruit is the actions that follow. That's what he's saying here. A good tree produces good fruit. So then make the tree good. He says, how in the world do you start? This is where it's universal. So

if you understand this as a truth and you embark on this truth, this is what you should be thinking. Am I striving to cultivate a good tree within myself? And what progress am I making on this endeavor? So what do you do? You look at your actions. You pay attention as Proverbs 4:23 says, and trace it back to its where it originates, your actions. Think of a spring. You see the sediments flowing and you look down at the bottom of the water. You see sediments, what do you do? Do you say it just came out from the ground? No, it's a spring. So what do you do? You trace it back to its source, the mountain spring. There you will see it has transversed through all tors of mountains, cross-sections, and it leads down. And if you if you see it's not a perfect mountain, there are sediments. And on that journey you see lo and behold the minerals the sediment of all sorts at the bottom. Same applies to our heart. Where does the actions flow? The source is our heart.

So with that understanding you try and try and try to work on improving your heart. What happens? You try to make the tree good. You try to change your heart because you know it's what truly matters to what Jesus says here. But as you do so, this is what happens. And I'm not talking about just you cleansing a little part of your life. I'm talking you are taking this verse as serious as it ought to be. This is what happens. You find out that there are obstacles in your way. And the more and more you search your heart, the bigger the obstacle is to the point it's not just a small obstacle. It's a wall. And you cannot penetrate that wall. It doesn't matter how hard you try to enter that wall is there. And what is it? You find a lack of goodness. You somehow cannot penetrate that wall as it were because you find you are lacking goodness. It's an undeniable truth. If you are honest with yourself, if you're honestly tracing back and you are making every effort, you will be honest to yourself that as you keep trying, as you resolutely with rigor examine your own heart and you try to fix all the actions, you find the inevitable truth that you are altogether wrong. Wrong at its core.

There's a word for it. It's called human depravity. Human depravity. What is that? You may ask. It means that we're going to get to it. Sin affects every part of a person. The mind, the will, the emotions, and even your very body. that there is inherently a sinfulness as you reach the source of the corruption of every human because of what happened in what's called the fall. The fall it affected every aspect of every human in its nature in a human nature making it incapable of achieving righteousness on your own. There are two verses I'm going to point out. Romans 3:9 says this. Are we better than they? This is speaking about Christians speaking about Jews because what happens is we like to compare ourselves, don't we? So if we can't find the problem here, maybe a certain certain certain people group, maybe they are the problem. How many times have we heard that today in our age? Well, it's already been stated here in Romans 3:9. This is how it's concluded. No, in no wise, the writer says, meaning absolutely not. Absolutely not. We have been charged both Jews and Gentiles. Gentiles covers all people that they the Jews and the Gentiles are all under sin. All under sin. Then Romans 3:13 says this there, the Jews and the Gentiles.

Let me just take a step back. You ever go to the doctor's office and you ever what's the first thing a doctor does? Open your mouth. And then what do you do? The physician checks your mouth. And then what do he does? Stick out your tongue. Because a doctor can find out many diseases just by looking at your mouth. Now with that understanding, Romans 3:13 says this. There Jews and Gentiles throat is an open sepre, an open grave. The stench, the look of death and corruption is in the mouth. And then with their tongues, opening your tongue, they have used deceit. And what is deceit? Misleading, tricking someone into believing something false. And then he ends the writer, the poison of asps. What is asps? Well, if you know a snake underneath its tongue has poison and the deadly bite is in all of us. That's what sin is. Are you honest with yourself with that text? Have you ever mislead people? Have you ever deceived somebody? Have you intentionally lied? It's because of sin. Because of sin. So, let's go back to the fall briefly because that's where it all began. Now, the Bible doesn't explicitly say that the serpent in the garden had venom. We don't see that in the in the scriptures. But the very actions

of the serpent depicts corruption. a corrupting influence much like venom. The serpent's temptation of Adam and Eve to sin is described with the imagery of poison and deadly consequences. Did he not lie and deceive drawing a parallel between the serpent's actions to the effects of venom? What did that venom do? What was the effect? What was the effect? God presented Adam and Eve with a choice.

Life or death. Life or death. And his desire was to saturate Adam and Eve in truth and love. They were created perfect. Why? Because God was perfect before the fall. Everything was perfect. not anything of wrong in that perfect environment. And yet, even though God safeguarded them from their own self-righteousness, from their own perpetual evil, a life of death, a life ultimately separated from him and his presence, Adam and Eve made the choice to listen to that serpent and his lies to receive knowledge of good and evil. By the way, God never intended us to know evil. He only wanted us to know good. Only good. But yet in man's condition after the fall, he now wants to create its own rules apart from God. Genesis 21:17, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day thou shalt eat thereof, thou shalt surely die." At that moment, sep spiritual separation occurred, then later physical separation, and then the consequence of eternal separation. But it doesn't end there because God did provide to Adam and Eve. I won't go there now. But that is the consequence. Three types of separations. See, man already had the knowledge of good, but entered in was the knowledge of evil. And Romans 6:23 says this, "For the wages of sin is death." That's what brought upon the human civilization.

Death. Death. Death. And the devil is the pay master. And he will see to it that you get paid. If you work for him, the wages of sin is death. This is the condition that we live in. And you know, we're not going to ever find out the mystery of that iniquity. 2 Thessalonians 2:7 says this, "The mystery of iniquity does already work." already work. But until the time that the spirit of God is taken out of the way, we won't see what ultimately how evil evil looks like until that day. So that's just a little bit of the fall. Now, what what do you do about that? How does that affect you? Now, let me go to your conscience. You might think in your mind, I can do a lot of things. Sure you can. You can do a lot of good. Sure you can. You have the knowledge of good. But what you will find out that your conscience will continue to prick at you if you have a still a sensitive conscience is that you can't fix the ultimate thing the impossible tax tasks of trying to get better your way. That's what your conscience is telling you that God has put into your mind. You can't fix the main problem. So what do you do? You shift your conscious to fixing just the actions. Is that you? He said, you know what? I can't make the tree good, so I can't do it. So, I'm just going to fix the actions. As pastor says, how is that working for you? How is that working for you? Because you're not ever going to deal with the main issue that Jesus is saying. You got to make the tree good in order to make the fruit good.

You can keep going on and on and ignore the truth, but it's going to keep bothering you and bothering you and bothering you. Your conscience until at one moment if you stop listening, your conscience would, as the Bible says, will be seared. and no longer do you have that detection and now you just focus on the actions. I'm praying that those that are in that condition that you won't arrive to that destination cuz God has put that into your conscience. Don't focus on the actions because the thing is you might have a good tree. Here's a problem. You're bad. You're evil. That's too strong. You might have a little bit of badness, but ultimately you cannot mix good with evil. Either way you look at it, the situation is the same. The situation is the same. It has to be pure good to make pure good fruit. So briefly, I'm going to go over four ways that mankind tries to make the tree good. Number one, the law. The law says, "Do this, don't do that. I reward you, I will punish you, and then off. Go and do it." What then? You can have the perfect law of the land. You can have a perfect law in the society. You can even look at the perfect law written in scripture. But the problem is you're disabled. You can't do the law says. So already right off the bat, you should already know I'm disabled. I have sin. I can't do that. But what does man do? I'm going to try in my disabled state. And you make an effort, but you find no real help. No

real help. No real help. Can't do it alone. Everyone else is in the same situation. So you can't walk. You can't walk. Why? The law does not change your nature. Law does not change your nature. How many times have we seen don't drink anymore, don't smoke, don't do this, don't do that. And then what does your heart do? You just do it even more. That happened in the prohibition time. You just stop something. Problem. There's a dam being filled up and filled up and filled up and filled up as there's doing no no because it has to go somewhere. You are walking, you are moving, you cannot stop.

You're going and you can't stop. So then that won't help. You can be the most dutiful person but in the end it will not resolve the main problem your nature. So it's law. So the law is limited. Galatians 3:21 Paul puts it this way. If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. In modern English means the law possessed the power to enable obedience to its command. then it would all we need to make us righteous. First that's a rhetorical question. It cannot and it will never because it doesn't address the fundamental issue of our nature. Second about culture and education. What about culture and education? One says oh it's because of ignorance. It's because a person doesn't know enough. So let's culture this person. Let's educate this person. They're all types of scientific knowledge. They're all types of cultural adaptations. But again, you can do all the right things and all the little actions, but it's all surface level. The end, culture and education only touches the surface. How do you say how might you go about this? You might ask if you put everything equal. An educated man has big ideas.

He makes a lot of money. Has all these interest. He has a fine taste for things. All the luxuries of this world. And he has even ability to discern. Okay, this is wrong. This is good. This is wrong. This is good. With all that being equal, what's clear is that all you're doing is just puffing yourself up. You're actually deceiving yourself more and more and more. You're avoiding still the main issue of who you are. You're just putting what's called a gloss over the main problem. So all that is just a gloss. It's just a surface. It's just a surface. Why? As one person put it, you can be the greatest, the wisest, and also the meanest of all mankind. Because ultimately education and culture cannot make your heart pure. It cannot make your heart good because it does not reach the depths of your soul. How about number three? Beauty and art. Beauty and art. So, we live in a time of oh, you don't have just physical art. You have digital art and all types of things out there in the world. This sculpture and that sculpture. Anything to just sharpen up the mind and improve its taste. That's very popular today, isn't it? Just fill yourself with images. I preached a sermon on this.

You can do all sorts of things of there's so many makeover type shows. Have you noticed makeover this, makeover that, a physical thing? But here's the problem. Just go back to history to the European history, the Renaissance. And as you look into it, art boomed at a tremendous rate. But what was at a decline, what was at its death was morality. As art expanded, morality said is dead. It's dead. How did that work out for the Renaissance? Nothing. Because what God expects is holiness. That is not an image. That's not a sculptor. It's you. Your heart. So it's nothing external. God expects holiness, beauty in the soul, a spiritual beauty. So again, it does not deal with the human soul. No matter how pretty you might make images and sculptures and this thing and that, it does not ultimately will be a savior to you. Last one, number four, environment. Environment. Let's just take out a person out of his slums and that will make the person good. Now, I'm not going to overstate this, but it is good to take people out of the slums. Nothing wrong with that. But you don't change the main problem by doing that. You can change the environment in itself. It's it's good, but you don't deal with changing the s the the heart of man. As the saying goes, take the bitter tree, plant it in Eden, water it with its rivers, and let the angel Gabriel be the gardener. The tree will still be bitter and the fruit will still be bitter. That's an old saying and it's true. It is true. External adjustments do not transform human nature. Old problems will surface as it always does. We've seen this in communism, in socialism. What always seems to happen, old problems seem to just always resurface over and over and over

again because none of that ever will affect the source of the problem, human nature. Now, let me give two clear reasons why your nature needs to be changed to bear good fruit. First, God is the source of all good. mentioned that in Genesis. He is the source of all good, both physical, spiritual, in its purity and in all its blessedness. But once you cut your the source off, where are you left with? You're left to your own self.

You can take a blank canvas and put it in front of yourself and create something and will always be in its form some hint of sin, some hint of selfishness. It will never be to glorify God in its 100% source. Because again, you can start off all over again, but if you don't start all over with the source, it doesn't matter what you do, you will always get back to where you're at now. So don't frustrate yourself if you've been trying to do that over and over again because you're not connected to the main source of all good. Second, and this is where I'm going to end. This is the solution where it says, "Make the tree good." Where Jesus says, "Make the tree good." We went over four different ways to make the tree good. And all of it only touches the actions. What can truly make the tree good? Here it is. When Christ says, "Make the tree good," he proceeds to do it. He proceeds to do it. How does he do it? He does it by coming to us, to every soul of man on earth, and offers first forgiveness for all of our past sins. 1 Peter 2:24, who his own self bear our sins in his own body on the tree, whose stripes ye were healed. That's not talking about physical healing. That is talking about healing from sin, the source. What cut us off from the source? Jesus comes down and proceeds to change that being cut off. He does it. He proceeds to do it. And you might be thinking right now as I thought about this before my salvation. Okay, but my sins in the past, it can't be fixed. I tried so hard. I've seen it myself.

There's no one can fix this sin. I've tried it so many times. Hold it. You've tried. You've seen it fail. Have you come to that conclusion and go, "Where else is there hope? Where else is there hope? Where must I turn then? Have you come to the end of yourself in that way where you said I have enough? I am done trying to figure this thing out because nothing is trying hooking me back to the source. Has that impacted you in the course of your life? Has that impacted you in your life? because he's the one and the only one and that's why he's called the savior. He puts an end to the corrupt tree by putting himself tree. Galatians 6:7 says, "Whosoever man seweth shall he also reap." That runs through your mind and it's true. You might say, "Tomorrow I've s I've sinned today, but tomorrow I'll sin even more." that might be running across your mind. You might say this sins that I'm committing I'm going to commit even greater future sins that fruitfulness of sin of bad tree corrupt tree bad fruit will cease will cease because take because Christ takes it all. He takes all of that, all of the sins now, and all of the sins in the future in one instance because he's the savior. He stops the corrupt tree from producing corrupt fruit.

1 Peter 2:24 again says that we being dead to sins, that's our old our old condition. Is that you today? that we being that descent should live unto righteousness. Is that you today? Are you living in righteousness? Because it didn't just end with Jesus paying for our sins, past, present, and future. He makes us right before God. And you know what? There's a word for it. It's called imputation. You didn't deserve it. I didn't deserve it. But he imparts righteousness. Not any kind of righteousness, mind you, but his own righteousness. So that when God looks at you, he doesn't see you, your name, whoever that may be. He sees Christ, his name written. That should overwhelm your heart. But I realize as pastor mentioned, our hearts are slow. Think about this truth. Christ makes statements very simple but he makes us want he makes us to think about it. Think about until it reaches our hearts because he wants the truth to change our nature. He wants us to have a new nature. Second 2 Corinthians 5:17 says this. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new. Sit in that, live in that, breathe it. That is your spiritual lungs. This truth, you're a new creature. Are you living as such a new creature? What amazing thing, isn't it? And here's the thing, he doesn't just take care of the main problem. He wants a relationship. And it's a love relationship. This is one of the most mightiest motives that we can relate to, brothers and

sisters. The mightiest motives is is love for us. He did all of this because of love. Christ makes the tree good. And yet another way his love, he imparts it to us. And it's what his love is what leads us to imitate him. It's his love that helps us to obey him. It's his love that helps us to avoid any d disruption in the connection with him. We want to stay so connected to him. See, 1 John 1:7 says this, "But if you walk in the light as he is in the light," now this is important because he doesn't say there that if you walk according to light. It doesn't say according to light. It says if we walk in the light, why is this so massively important? Because it's not the important thing is not where we walk. I'm sorry. It's not The important thing is not how we walk, but where we walk. Not how we walk. So the idea is, okay, God just gives me a new life. I'm new in Christ, a new creature. Now here are a bunch of rules now and and just follow it. That's not how Christ works. What this is saying is now you have light in you and he's walking with you day to day to day to day.

That's what it means. If you walk in the light as he is in the light, that's tremendous that we get to be in the presence of God through his spirit in the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is the way we have fellowship. It ends with we have fellowship with one another. That's you and the Lord, you and God. And it's by the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanses us from all sin. So you have a real fellowship with God. You have a real fellowship with God. Any moment you can enter into that fellowship because he cleanses us from sin. He hooks us back to the source. We're now communicating. Romans 5:8. But God commended his love toward us and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Tremendous truth. Tremendous truth. Now, there's so much more I can go into, but here's the thing. It's impossible to live the Christian life. I haven't stated that enough with scripture after scripture after scripture. It's living in line with the Lord. And so if you look at a Christian and you go, they're not living like Christ. You might say, it's all well and done, but in reality, it's not doesn't look like that. Well, let me deal with that. Now, that is true. I myself included. We're not perfect in every sense of the word in the image of Christ. And there you have fair criticism to put on every single one of us as believers. And it's not because of God. Never ever put it on him. Never ever put it on Christ because he's the one that changes us. And it's us that we haven't stayed connected more into his fellowship. That's it. So any inconsistencies that you see in us, do not lay them on Christ. Do not lay them on Christ. Let me give you some testimonies of the past.

Look at Paul. Once a persecutor of Christians, killed actual Christians for a living and enjoyed it. He thought he was doing right. Ask the Apostle Paul what is in his life. I'd give you so many verses from the Apostle Paul. What about the tinker John Bunan who in prison wrote the famous Pilgrim's Progress? What about all the history of Christians of all ages and you look at how Christianity has arrived to right here, right now that have come before us. Think about them. How about the mission fields today out in the world being persecuted for Christ. See, if you really do your thorough work, you cannot say that Christianity is alive and well. There are personal witnesses right here in this very room. As a pastor, before I was a pastor, Pastor Waldrip, all pastors can can look back at our ministries and go, there have been dozens, if not countless amount of people that I don't even know yet that I might have said something and their lives have been transformed by the power of Christ. Where everyone can say as Galatians 2:20, I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. I know our brothers and sisters here can share that scripture verse with their lives. So Isaiah 1:18 says this, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Have you not done this today with this word? Though your sin be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, they shall. Will you be one of them that is yet to know this truth? That is what I'm praying for. That is what this church is praying for. For that very thing that only Christ can do to change our nature. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, I thank you so much for your word. Father, there's just so much to think about what Jesus Christ has done for us for taking care of the source of our problem, which is sin, which affects every part of our life. Father, please do only what you can do to the Lord Jesus Christ

with those trusting in him and him alone to where he says I have made the tree good because I went to the tree. I did what you cannot do, which is fix the source problem. And that is reconciling mankind to God. Do the work, the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross for the payment of our sin. Father, do a mighty work here tonight and this morning and all throughout today, even this week. Lord, please bear these truths. Let your word re not return unto thee void in the work of salvation. Bless to this end, Father, for it's in your glory and for your praise. In the name of thy son, Jesus. Amen.