

Lions, Wolves & Sheep, Oh My!

Part 8: Discerning False Prophets

(preached 6/12/22)

Please turn to *Matthew 7:15* and/or *2 Peter 2:1*.

LAST WEEK:

- Our hearts are the most vulnerable part of us and need to be guarded.
- Guarding does not mean turning off emotions and not feeling anything—that's referred to as "hardhearted" in the Bible and is always negative.
- ***Guarding the heart means it follows us and not the other way around.***
- Emotions are the result of something going on inside of us, good or bad, and should not be leading us into anything.
- Neither the heart, mind, or flesh can create nor discern truth.
- Feelings, emotions, thoughts, logic, and intellect do not understand God or the Bible.
- Scripture shows us that God the Holy Spirit communicates with our Christ-self, who is the real us that will live on after this mortal body passes away.
- Only our Christ-self can understand God and the Bible because it's been born again into His image.
- God assigned the role of believing truth, not discerning it, to the heart.
- When the heart believes, the HS causes "rivers of living water" to flow from it to glorify God and minister to people.
- ***The role of the heart is 1) to be convicted and convinced to believe and 2) to be God's gateway into this world to work through.***
- Though this role is amazing and wonderful, it must still follow and not lead.
- Following our feelings gets us into bad relationships, believing false teachings and rejecting the true, making false assumptions about others, and much more.
- JESUS WEPT for Mary and Martha and shared their grief over the death of Lazarus...but He didn't follow that grief or sorrow. He was being led by His Father Who sent Him there to raise Lazarus from the dead.
- If He'd followed His sorrow, He may have gotten sidetracked as to why He was there AND His faith may have disappeared in the shadow of His empathy at Mary & Martha's grief and loss.
- Empathy, compassion, sympathy, and grief are meant to be felt and expressed as Jesus clearly shows us in John 11...but we must be inspired and led by the Holy Spirit & His Word and not those emotions.
- As the sons and daughters of God, we follow the HS and not our flesh, not our minds, and not the heart.
- The flesh is crucified and doesn't get a voice. The heart and mind submit to God and His Word.
- We'll go wrong when we try and make God and His Word submit and be conformed to our thoughts and feelings.

Today we bring everything full circle and end this sermon series. Most are familiar with this famous saying of Jesus:

Matthew 7:15-20 (ESV)

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?

¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.

¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.

¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

OUTWARD VS. HIDDEN. Jesus is teaching His disciples to discern what’s harder to recognize at first glance. A wolf that’s open about what he is and what his intentions are is easier to pinpoint, but one who dresses up as a sheep takes a deeper level of judgment to ferret out.

ON THE HUNT & HUNGRY. Wolves are predators and therefore always on the hunt. They’re hungry (ravenous) and must feed frequently.

Since Christ is using wolves as symbol for human beings, then:

- We understand that the “prey” they’re after are Christians whom Jesus Himself compared to sheep and
- The “food” they’re so hungry for is to deceive said sheep and turn them away from God and His Word.

WHAT’S THE FRUIT. Jesus teaches us that we’ll tell the difference by their fruits, so what “fruit” is He talking about? We must know! Let’s first eliminate the fruit the Lord isn’t referring to: good outward works.

- A ruthless & greedy corporate CEO can donate millions to charity to convince everyone he’s a good guy.
- A murderous dictator can provide food, shelter, and clothing to the poor of his country while trying to commit genocide elsewhere.
- The guy claiming to be the second coming of Christ seems to be a nice fellow: patient, gentle, compassionate...but not only is he deceiving his followers but he’s taking all their money & possessions.

MASS SHOOTING IN NAME OF ISLAM. I remember years ago there was a mass shooting attack committed in the name of Islam by this one fellow who killed several people. His next door neighbor was interviewed and she said “he was a really nice guy! One time my garbage

can was blown over by the wind, and he picked it all up for me and put it back in the can. He was always doing things like this for me!”

JESUS WAS NOT REFERRING TO FRUIT LIKE THESE WHEN HE CALLED UPON US TO JUDGE SAID FRUIT AS GOOD OR BAD.

He was referring to what the false prophet teaches and the effect it has upon his listeners.

EVERYTHING AWESOME GOSPEL. In the first sermon in this series, I prepared you to discern this so let's do a quick review. The “everything is awesome” gospel produces the following fruit within converts:

- Unbelievers thinking God is here to affirm them just as they are.
- Get Saved for benefits package: blessed and abundant life now, everlasting life in Heaven later (no suffering).
- Self-focused & centered—it's all about me.
- God treated like a restaurant waiter or genie in bottle—gives me what I want.
- God needs to get in line with our will, hopes, dreams, and goals.
- Little to no pursuit of holy sanctification. Lifestyle isn't much different after accepting Jesus than it was before.
- Loses faith and hope quickly & easily: especially at persecution, suffering, and unanswered prayer.
- Perverts God's grace and sees it as permission to sin. Believes God doesn't mind/turns blind eye to their sins.

The true Gospel produces the following fruit:

- Unbelievers recognize they're sinners in need of a Savior.
- Cry out to Jesus to save them, and are forever grateful to Him after.
- Die to the self and its desires, giving themselves to Christ and desiring to be holy as He is holy.
- Dying to old lifestyles, hopes, goals, and dreams and taking on those of Christ.
- The plan of God becomes their new passion and they seek to fulfill it.
- Are deeply rooted in faith and can withstand persecution, suffering, and unanswered prayers.
- Loves and lives in God's grace.

Look what Paul says to the elders in Ephesus:

Acts 20:26-31 (ESV)

²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all,

²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.

FRUIT IS DOCTRINE & EFFECT. Again, the fruit Jesus and Paul are referring to has nothing to do with acts of charity or personality characteristics, but Paul is pinpointing the teaching of doctrine.

Verses 26-27: Paul is telling them that he taught them everything—the tough new, the good news, the consequences, the rewards, the mission, the pitfalls, everything. Therefore his hands are clean because of the same.

Verse 28 specifically addresses the leaders of the Ephesian church and here's Paul admonition: guard both the flock AND themselves...from what?

Verse 29 tells us: fierce wolves are coming into their church and won't be holding back. What are these wolves and what will they do? How will they be "preying" upon the people of the church?

Verse 30 makes it clear: they will SPEAK...what word? TWISTED doctrine...false teaching. What's the result of teaching anything contrary to God's Word: to draw the sheep to themselves and convert them to wolves. It's already started to happen according to Paul: even some of the leaders of that church are believing false teachings which are deceiving them and then they, in turn, deceive others.

Verse 31: Paul knows this will happen and he's grieved to tears over it.

MOTIVATION? What motivates a false prophet? We like to say things like money, but Paul just told us—*they want their own followers*...their own disciples. FP's are like dark evangelists who are preaching another Gospel:

Matthew 24:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

2 Timothy 3:13 (ESV)

¹³ while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

DECEIVED THEMSELVES FIRST. Taking a look at 2 *Timothy 3:13*: false prophets deceive others because they were first deceived themselves.

2 Peter 2:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction.

² And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

³ By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

Verse 1: Peter says people teaching falsehoods bring in “destructive heresies” and the word “heresy” means “choices, parties, and disunion.” Therefore a destructive heresy is a teaching that inspires a person to choose a belief that’s contrary to what the Lord wrote in His Bible to the point of leading them away from the Christian faith. One that will cause division vast enough to break the bond of Christian fellowship, even to the point of denying Jesus.

Verse 2: false teachings almost always lead to destruction...why? The last half of the verse tells us: the way of the truth is “blasphemed.” Blasphemy means to verbally rail against, impious talk toward someone like God or something like Biblical truth. In the case of 2 Peter 2, FP’s and FT’s are speaking against sound Biblical doctrine and preaching something else.

Verse 3: FP’s and FT’s covet something, which is why they speak deceptive words—what do they covet? Disciples, followers, people to believe them and believe in what they teach.

MODERN EXAMPLES. I’m now going to get more specific about modern day false teachings that do all of the things we’ve talked about so far: deceive people, produce bad fruit in them, and lead them into believing falsehoods against what the Lord says in His written Word.

EVOLUTION. There have been some going on for awhile such as the teaching of evolution, and Ken Ham’s Ministry “Answers in Genesis” have done a great job fighting on that front.

DECONSTRUCTION & CRT. Two going on right now in the 2020’s are Deconstruction Theology and Critical Race Theory. Both of these woke ideologies have been brought into the church by wolves-in-sheep’s clothing and taught as God’s truth when, in fact, they are destructive heresies that are deceiving the sheep.

Deconstruction Theology is actually something old that’s been rebranded and repackaged as something new and fresh. 20 years ago it was called The Emergent Church and 20 years before that something else. In a general sense, ***it’s a new generation of Christians who’ve decided to challenge the theology of the older generation and rethink it all.***

GENERATIONAL NAIVETY & HUBRIS. Every new generation falls into the same trap including mine and yours when we were young: they believe:

- That they're the first generation to truly question & challenge concepts like racism, sexuality, etc.
- They're the first to overcome and achieve enlightenment on these issues in society.
- Therefore they're morally superior to the generations before them.
- Seek to change society from both an influential and legal standpoint—to dismantle the old and bring in the new.

SAME WITH CHURCH. The same thing applies in the church. A new generation comes along who seeks to dismantle the old traditions, theologies, teachings, and ways of the former generations and bring in what they believe is new, fresh, hot, and what God wants. This has been happening for years.

FRUIT? What's the fruit of this happening over and over? We went over this in sermon #1 of this series. I read modern day statistics that may have shocked you: church attendance dropping, people not just falling into sin but away from the faith completely, less people identifying as Christians, less Christians seeing the Bible as God's Word and living according to it. Need I go on? Revival isn't happening even though we have hot, flashy mega-churches with laser lights and fog machines where every worship service is like a going to a concert.

REVIVAL BACK THEN. Ironically, the biggest revivals that swept up our entire nation happened "back in the day" in generations far gone!

Deconstruction Theology seeks to dismantle sound Biblical truths and conform them—AND THE CHURCH—to modern day morality and acceptance.

Romans 12:2 (ESV)

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

SOLOMON. This isn't new and King Solomon had it right:

Ecclesiastes 1:9 (ESV)

⁹ What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.

This was happening for thousands of years. There would be a generation of believers who experienced God's holiness, love, justice, grace, and mercy. Who was brought to their knees under His holy justice, then lifted to their feet by His love and mercy. Who lived

for Him, served Him, and followed His ways. Look what happens to Israel right after Joshua dies”

KIDS WERE BORN. Then their kids were born and the parents told their kids about God and all the great experiences they had with Him. The kids were “carried” by the faith of their parents for awhile, but as they got older many came to reject their parents’ faith. Instead, they looked to the pagan nations around them and their ways and wanted to try them out.

HOLINESS. The parents resisted fornication, for example, because their relationship with God was such that they both feared and loved Him and wanted to be holy as He is holy.

RULES. The kids only saw things like this as religious rules that restricted them from living their lives, because they didn’t have their own relationship with God. Eventually classic Romans 6 rebellion would take place and next thing you know the kids are worshipped Baal instead of Yahweh, because Baal lets them follow desires of their flesh and the passions of their hearts.

Look what happens right after Joshua passes away:

Judges 2:10-13 (ESV)

¹⁰ And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel.

¹¹ And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals.

¹² And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger.

¹³ They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth.

Baal was and is a real god, a fallen angel, and he’s still around and still deceiving people today. He may very well have different tools in which to reach people, but his gospel is the same: follow your desires, follow your heart, & follow your thoughts. God’s design doesn’t matter, be whatever or whoever you want to be: male, female, non-binary, transgender, pansexual, etc. You can go from one to the other if you want to!

BE YOUR OWN GOD. In other words, ***you can become your own god.*** You are god. Instead of conforming yourself to who and what God created you to be, you can recreate yourself into whatever you’re feeling at the moment. You can even be an animal if you want to!

THIS IS THE FRUIT OF DECONSTRUCTION THEOLOGY and its drawing some Christians away from the truth written in the Bible. Remember something: ***Jesus is called the Word of God and the Bible is a written representation of the Person, Character, and Plans of Jesus.***

TO BE DRAWN WAY FROM THE TRUTHS OF THE SCRIPTURE IS TO BE DRAWN AWAY FROM JESUS...JUST LIKE PETER SAID.

PROCREATED THEN BORN AGAIN. We are procreated when born, then born again as direct creations of God.

- He is the Author and Creator and He gets to decide what exists and what doesn't.
- If He said He created human beings to be humans and not animals, then that's truth.
- Yet evolution says we're apes and DT goes even further saying we can be whatever animal we want to be.

This is not new! Ancient pagan religions have their followers imitating and acting like animals, dressing up like them and “channeling” the spirits of animals to the point of growling, walking on all 4's, etc. Baal is still alive and active among humanity today! Romans 1 explicitly condemns this practice:

Romans 1:21-25 (ESV)

²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools,

²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,

²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Look at verse 24: the result of being whatever you want to be is not only exchanging the truth for a lie, but will eventually ***provoke God to remove the restraints of their human conscience which results in a person giving themselves completely over to whatever passions they've already been indulging in.***

- We are not God.
- We are not co-creators of God.
- We do not get to decide what we are.
- We don't get to determine our own path or destiny. God gets to decide everything.
- We get to bow down to Him and obey Him.

Luke 6:46 (ESV)

⁴⁶ “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”

POTTER-CLAY. While it's not as popular as it once was, there are some who still take wet clay and form it into pottery. Look what the Lord says about it:

Isaiah 29:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, "He did not make me"; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?

We're the clay. On the day we received Jesus as our Savior, we were finally wet clay. God took us in His hands, put us on that whirly gig thing, and began to form us into a vessel He could use.

The clay has no power, only the Potter. The clay has no voice to tell the potter what they want to be, only the Potter has a voice and only the Potter decides what vessel He's going to make this lump of clay into.

Deconstruction Theology has embraced the modern day morals of the world, of Baal, and are trying to teach them as the commandments of God. Christians have been deceived by this and the ones that are have become evangelists of this false gospel.

Critical Race Theory is trying to make everything skin-color deep. Remember that God does not judge according to the outward appearance nor even the content of someone's character. He's looking for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is like a mega-radiant sun living inside of us and, when Father gazes down at us from heaven, we likely appear like little suns to Him. Get it...suns...sons....

CRT BRINGS GOD, THE GOSPEL, AND HUMANITY DOWN TO AN EARTHLY LEVEL. While Jesus did feed and clothe people, His mission was their souls and NOT making sure their bodies had food, shelter, and clothing. **His sermons and actions were geared to inspire people to repent and turn to Him as their Savior and Messiah.** The eternal life He promised didn't include the bodies they were living in, but started with their internal spirits being born again and eventually becoming clothed in a new body.

BE MARTYRED & DIE. If anything Jesus told His disciples over and over that they would all be martyred—to die for the faith and be greatly rewarded in the Kingdom for doing so. All the disciples except John were killed while they were young or middle aged. His healing of their bodies were specific signs of Who He was and His Kingdom to come in the future.

DIDN'T DELIVER FROM INJUSTICE. While He did care for justice, He didn't deliver His sheep from the injustice of the society they lived in. As a matter of fact, He told them they would need to endure persecution and hatred for His Name's sake, even to the point of death. He said they would need to endure it and not take revenge. Both Jesus and His Apostles were accused, arrested, and punished by unjust authorities which set the example for you and I.

CRT in the church is the opposite. It takes the emphasis away from the condition of our spirits and places them to that of our bodies, minds, & hearts.

- It wants to redirect the church away preaching Jesus' Gospel to that of social justice, which is a different gospel and will produce a different fruit.
- Not surprisingly, proponents of CRT end up deconstructing what Scripture states even to the point of creating a far different Jesus in its own image.
- I've heard people make horribly blasphemous statements about Him, claiming He was a socialist!

HELPED DISENFRANCHISED. There's no doubt Jesus helped the disenfranchised of society and here's why: *they were the ones willing to listen to Him and believe!* The rich politicians and priests of that day had no use for Christ and only saw Him as a threat. It was the thieves, prostitutes, demon-possessed, the lame, the poor and anyone else the religious authorities of that time condemned as sinners who found hope in Christ.

CONDITION OF SPIRITS. In other words it wasn't money or social status—it was about the conditions of their souls. The priesthood that should have been teaching these people had written them off as hopelessly wicked whereas Jesus said “come to Me all you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”

Both DT and CRT teachings and the “prophets” who share this doctrine appear as sheep. They claim to fight for the disenfranchised, the minorities, and the persecuted when in fact they are leading those same people astray. They're hungry wolves among the flock, bringing in destructive heresies that are leading people away from Christ and not toward Him.

KNOW BY FRUITS. Remember saints: these wolves APPEAR as sheep and take more to discern. By their fruits we know them. Said fruits are not charitable acts or a pleasant character. *Said fruits are the results it's having upon the people who believe them.*

WE'VE GONE MAD. We've all looked around modern American society and see this fruit—we're going mad! People don't know what a woman is anymore. Some claim to be “non-binary.” Drag shows are taking place within churches. The latest one is that drinking coffee is racist.

That is the fruit of CRT and DT.

BEAR GOD'S FRUIT. You and I are called upon to bear God's fruit and not that of the world. In the famous Parable of the Sower, listen closely to what Jesus says:

Mark 4:20 (ESV)

²⁰ But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

The Word Jesus is referring to is the Word of God. When we hear and follow it, we will be good trees bearing good fruit.