

The Tree

Matthew 7 vs 15-23

Intro

Picture Perfect (pic) series. What does the perfect picture look like in a broken world? We have been building a picture based on the images Jesus gave us at the end of His sermon on the mount. Started with a **door(pic)** where we are inviting to keep knocking on heaven's door as we have a Father who hears our persistent prayers as we ask Him to transform us. Then you step out and have to choose which **road(pic)** you want to travel on. The broad road where self is King or the road less travelled where Jesus is King and leads us to heaven. Last week we looked around us at the **birds(pic)** who never seem to worry because they have a heavenly Father. Imagine a life without worry!!! Today we come to the **tree (pic of fruit tree)**. The best way we can know what kind of tree it is, is to look at the fruit.

Matthew 7 vs 15-20 (slide)

¹⁵ **“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.**

1. Discerning Deception (slide)

One of the most dangerous things in the world is wrong belief. A wrong believe can ruin your life (EG you are a mistake, not worthy of love... earlier the better for the enemy).

How many voices everyday claim to speak truth

Me -emails asking for gift cards

You have been chosen

Look closer, there is always something that is just off. The best lie is the one that is 99% true.

Fake news...what is fake and what is not?

In issues of faith there are voices that claim to speak God's truth. What measure do we use to determine whether someone is a true Man or woman of God?

We can be ignorant and gullible, and Jesus here shows us clearly how to protect ourselves.

The Bible is a dangerous book—perhaps the most dangerous book in the world—because it claims to be God's own words, inspired, authoritative voice of God. So, it is no wonder that people turn to the Bible to back up their own ideas and values. Down through history, and in our own day, the words of this book have been twisted to support all kinds of perversions. The reason people use the Bible that way is because they hope to draw from its authority. They are trying to tell us, "This isn't just my idea. This is what God says. So, you'd better listen to him." History is littered with tragic stories of so-called men and woman of God using the bible to deceive people with devastating consequences and it goes on today because we don't use the measures He has given us.

Do not be surprised if the ministers of faith who are false come to you as ministers of righteousness.

Paul in 2 Corinthians 11 vs 13- 15 (slide)

¹³ false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. ¹⁵ It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness.

This is the "wolf in sheep's clothing" that Jesus is talking about. I get deceived when I am caught up with the outward manifestations, abilities and appearances of a person. It's hard to notice a false prophet merely by outward appearance.

Lloyd-Jones, "So you do not suspect that there is anything wrong at all; there is nothing that at once attracts your attention or arouses your suspicion, nothing glaringly wrong" The outward impression is never the way to check for fruit. It's the 99% truthful lie.

In the verses that follow our text today we are given some clear guidance on what the fruit is and is not and yet again and gain we have been caught using the wrong measure. In verses immediately following our text Jesus says

Matthew 7 vs 22-23 (slide)

²² 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 in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

Not everyone who names god knows God (slide)

People can claim to believe in Him and name Him and even do miracles in his name and yet not know Him. It’s all about relationship, knowing Jesus, and you will see how critical that is to bearing fruit.

So how does it work that someone can still do miracles etc. and not know Him?

Satan can imitate the gifts

Remember Moses?

other religions speak of miracles...but the enemy’s miracles always come with a cost...bondage and slavery. Satan can imitate the gifts, it’s the fruits that he has a problem with. A bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

Acts 8 vs 9-23 (slide) (Simon the sorcerer)

⁹ Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, ¹⁰ and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, “This man is rightly called the Great Power of God.” ¹¹ They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. ¹² But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³ Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.

...¹⁸ When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money ¹⁹ and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

²⁰ Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! ²¹ You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. ²² Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. ²³ For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."

Notice that he is a performer of miracles (great power of God) but That is not what tells me if he is a man of God. It is the fruit that tells me if he is of God:

Pride and boasted he was great (Vs 9) – attention to self

Want to buy more power (vs 18) – for self

Motives, bitterness, captive to sin (vs 22-23) some clear red flags here.

We need to make sure we understand what the fruit is because historically, people have looked at the works as fruit, the miracles, which mean the person must be a man of God and yet what does He say here? (This is where Jim Jones began). Please know that I am in no way dispelling gifting and that God still works in miraculous ways. I am saying that is not what I am using to see what kind of tree it is.

Gifts are for the body

Remember who the gift is for, the body and not for the person. I can be out of fellowship with God and yet still work in my gift because the gift is not for my benefit, it is God's grace for the body (e.g. Jimmy Swaggart, etc.).

1 Corinthians 9 vs 27 (slide)

²⁷ No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Jesus says that Fruit is the test of genuineness. We have clarity that miracles are not part of that test. So, what are the fruits?

2. The test of genuineness (slide)

True and false prophets can be distinguished by their “fruits.” If you want to know what kind of tree it is, look at the fruit, the fruit don’t lie. The wolf can deceive but the tree can’t. Focus on the fruit.

Doctrine(slide)

There's false doctrine out there, and this can only bring bad fruit - it cannot give me victory over sin or transform my character but leaves me in bondage.

Paul warned the Ephesian elders

Acts 20: 29-30 (slide)

I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves’ men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them

Warning to Timothy,

2 Tim 4: 3-4 (slide)

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths

Jesus and the NT writers had really harsh words for anyone who taught false doctrine. Took this very seriously.

James 3 vs 1 (slide)

Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

Always test what is being said and taught with the full revelation of Scripture. Know the Word and listen to the Spirit.

Lifestyle (slide)

Is the person living a life of obedience to how He has asked me to live? I embrace the life of Matt 5-7. Be wary of spiritual leaders who live by different rules than the rules that apply to everyone else. I need to embrace everything I am asking you to embrace... a life of surrender to the lordship of Christ.

My walk matches my talk. My teaching and lifestyle have to correspond. Perfection- No Brokenness -Yes. Be careful of a teacher who doesn't teach out of their own brokenness. Watch out for the show. I can deceive myself into being who you need me to be and not be myself. I need to be vulnerable and honest with you and admit my failings.

So, it's not about being perfect, it's about our desire to constantly become more like Jesus, knowing we will fail many times. That does not change my desire. My desire every day is to be sinless because you will be blessed, and God will be glorified. So, look at how the teacher is living. Does it reflect the kingdom and what he teaches?

Character (slide)

I die to self and embrace Christ everyday asking Him to fill me with His Spirit and the result is

Galatians 5 vs 22-25 (slide)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

There is a fruit that is impossible to bear outside of Christ. Remember the context of this message. Life in the kingdom. Impossible outside of Christ. By fruit we refer to whatever Christ produces in and through the believer who lives in close fellowship with Him. The fruit is fruit of the Spirit. The origin is HIM. He produces this in me, and I become more and more like Him.

Can you see that it shouldn't be guess work? He says you WILL know them by their fruits.

Look at well known “ministers of God” who have fallen and do the test on them. You will find the fruit was there to see long before the fall and yet folk were caught up with the external, the gifting.

We must be caught up with these inward realities.

In Jesus' day, everyone knew that the buckthorn had little black berries which could be mistaken for grapes, and that there was a thistle whose flower, from a distance, might be mistaken for a fig. But no one would confuse the buckthorn and the grape once he started to use the fruit to make some wine. No one would be taken in by thistle flowers when it came to eating figs for supper.

The inward reality that shows up in the fruits, exposing the wolf in sheep's clothing. False prophets can look like real prophets, and even their fruit may appear to be genuine. But pay attention to their doctrine, lifestyle, and Character, and over time they will be seen for who they are. Make sure you know those you give yourselves to.

3.The secret to fruit bearing (slide)

So, what is the key to all of this? Jesus says it's about knowing Him, and this takes us to His other image of a tree in John 15...**the Vine (pic)**

John 15 (slide)

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

The whole purpose of the Vineyard and branches is to bear fruit...not produce flowers. That's why there is pruning...because the whole point is fruit bearing.

The vine...healthy branches...purpose of branch...bear fruit. This is so NB to Him. Warren Wiersbe: “Your Heavenly Father is never nearer to you than when He is pruning you. Sometimes He cuts away the dead wood that might cause trouble; but often He cuts off living tissue that is preventing you from generating a bumper crop. Pruning does not only refer to removing what is bad. It can also

mean cutting away the good and the better so that we might enjoy the best. Yes, pruning hurts, but it also helps. We may not enjoy it, but we need it." Pruning happens so we can fulfil our purpose, to bear fruit.

There is no closer relationship than a branch and a vine. The one thing a gardener cannot do is graft an old life into the vine. Self cannot be grafted into the vine; it has to be cut off. The Vine does its work through the branch as the conduit. What is your purpose for being on earth?

Vine survives without branch but not vice versa. It is what it is because of the vine. Can a branch exist without the vine? Can you exist and function without Jesus? All of its sustenance comes from the vine...you? All the branches needs are met in the vine...you? Have you surrendered all?

George Mueller: (slide and pic)

"As far as I know, He has all of me there is."

ABIDE (slide)

The verb "abide" (or, "remain") is used 11 times in John 15, 40 times in John's Gospel, and 27 times in John's epistles. "Live in such a manner that you are at home in Me and that I am at home in you."

John 14 vs 23 (slide)

²³ Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them"

The sole task of the branch is to stay connected to the Vine

The command is not to bear fruit but to ABIDE. We must get this right. We put guilt trips on ourselves...pray more, read more, stop being angry, stop lusting etc. Sin/behavior management. This is not the answer.

There is only one command here. Remember it is only the vine that can produce fruit. So, if I am not producing fruit what is that telling me?

The only reason I am Not bearing fruit is if I am not attached to the vine. So, the answer is not to try and produce but the connect to the Vine. EG Sinful patterns. EG Dad and swearing, drinking (not perfect but desires changed).

No one told him. When you are filled with the Spirit have you tried to cuss?
Evidence of the Vine

Jesus Christ is the “abiding place” for the Christian. He is the One from whom we derive spiritual life and strength and the means to become Christ-like. It is only through Him that we can “bear fruit.” It is by “abiding” in Him that we also enter into true union and fellowship.

Conclusion

What is your sole purpose?

John 15 vs 8 (slide)

⁸This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples

Does your fruit today clearly show what kind of tree you are? Can I ask your spouse, your family, workplace? Will you make knowing Jesus your passion and priority? We read up and know so much about things we are passionate about (Buckeyes, tiger woods, Ariane Grande, politics etc.). Is there evidence of your passion to know Him intimately and be connected. Watch what will happen to your battle with sin, with the fruit that will come.

Communion

This was his commitment to you. What is yours to Him? Use this moment to examine your heart and reconnect. Repent of wrong priorities. Surrender to Him.