

Sermon on the Mount

– 14 –

Wolves, Trees, and True Disciples

- Jesus starts chapter 7 talking to us about the importance of discernment.
- Judge rightly.
- Your ability to discern will determine which gate you choose and which path you walk – choices and destinations.

Matthew 7:15 (ESV) Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

- Beware – pay attention.
- Ravenous – greedy.
- Deceptive: they appear harmless, even helpful ("sheep's clothing"), but their true nature is dangerous and destructive.
- You are not to be naïvely accepting as a disciple of Christ.

Matthew 7:16-18 (ESV) 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.

- “You” – there is a responsibility that we have in knowing the right type of fruit. Red/green flags.
- Good trees produce good fruit.
- Diseased trees produce bad fruit.
- You can't gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles.
- Grapes and figs = good and nourishing.
- Thorns and thistles = painful, and destructive.

What is the "fruit"?

1. **Character:** Humility, love, holiness, integrity.
2. **Doctrine:** Faithful to the gospel, sound teaching and Christ.
3. **Impact:** Does their ministry build up the body or exploit it?

Galatians 5:22-24 (ESV) 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Fruit is not gifting.

What Jesus examines is the fruit.

Matthew 7:19-20 (ESV) 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.

- The pharisees had bad fruit – knowledge but no maturity.

- This is a warning of God's judgment: ultimately, those who corrupt the truth and refuse repentance will face destruction.
- False prophets will not escape judgment.
- Those who follow are in danger.

Jesus said that if anything causes you to sin, cut it off.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (ESV) 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.