

“A Tree Is Known by Its Fruit”
(Luke 6:43-45)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

Jesus told us

When we’re mistreated for doing/being

What our Lord calls us to do/be –

We shouldn’t retaliate:

But return love for their hatred –

Blessing for their curses,

Prayers for their mistreatment,

Forgiveness for their injustices –

In short,

We are to be merciful to the unkind and ungrateful

Even as our Father is merciful (Luke 6:35).

One of the greatest mercies we can show them

Is to help them see their need for Jesus –

To do that,

We need to be able to point out their sins.

What Jesus said this morning

May have primarily to do with how we are

To treat our brothers and sisters in Christ –

But it equally applies to how

We are to minister to unbelievers –

We shouldn’t try to point out their sins

Until we first deal with our own –

Especially if ours are worse.

Not to do so

Would be to do more harm than good,

And appear to be nothing more than hypocrites.

But dealing with our sins,

Will give us the necessary humility

To deal with others in the way

That would best help: with gentleness.

B. Preview.

Now when Jesus spoke of *blind guides*;

And being careful whom *we sit under*;

Or dealing with *specks* in a brother's eyes,

When we have *logs* in our own;

He was warning us

Against a Pharisaical attitude:

Why they were like this

Is what Jesus zeroes in on this evening:

It's because that's their nature.

Just as you can tell the nature of a tree

By the kind of fruit that grows on it,

So you can tell the nature of a person

By the things they do.

What Jesus tells us here

Will not only help us

Evaluate our own hearts –

Where we stand with the Lord –

It will help us evaluate others –

Whether we should receive them as the Lord's,

Or whether they should be the object of our evangelism.

II. Sermon.

A. Jesus first tells us

That every tree produces fruit

According to the kind of tree it is:

“For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush” (vv. 43-44).

Jesus spoke in parables –

As we noted last week –

To hide the truth from some,

While revealing it to others.

This isn't a parable,

But an analogy –

Analogies are meant

To make difficult spiritual truths

More accessible to an audience.

Everyone hearing this

Would immediately know

That what He says is true:

Good/useful trees produce good/useful fruit,
 While bad/useless trees produce bad/useless fruit.

He's likely not talking here

About two of the same kind of tree –

Like two apple or cherry trees –

One producing useful fruit,

The other useless –

Though it's possible to have sick trees –

But two different kinds of trees/plants –

One that is useful because it bears useful fruit,

And the other useless for the same reason –

Because of His example:

“For men do not gather *figs from thorns*, nor do they pick *grapes from a briar bush*.”

Useful fruit doesn't come

From plants that are by nature useless –

How can you know

Whether the tree or plant is useful?

By looking at the kind of fruit it produces.

B. The same is true

When it comes to people:

Jesus says, “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil *man* out of the evil *treasure* brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart” (v. 45).

How can we tell if someone is good or evil –

Useful or useless

When it comes to the Kingdom of God?

By the kind of fruit their life bears.

We can't see anyone's heart –

Only the Lord sees that –

But we can see their life –

Jesus tells us

This will show us what's in their heart.

The heart is our *affections* –

Our inclination to one thing or another –

It's what determines our wills –

We choose what we want;

We don't choose what we don't want.

If our heart is good –

And it is good –

Though not purely so –

If we have been born again by the Spirit;

If we have savingly trusted Jesus;

If He has cleansed it

Through the washing of regeneration –

We will choose good/useful things –

We will produce the fruits of godliness.

This is just another way of saying:

That if we are justified –

Declared just by God

Because of Jesus' righteousness –

We will be sanctified –

We will be turning away from

The things God tells us are wrong,

And doing what He says is right.

Likewise, if our heart is evil –

If it's in the same condition

As it was when we came into the world;

If it hasn't been cleansed by the Spirit –

Then we will choose what is bad/useless/evil –

We will break God's Law –

Jesus uses another analogy –

That of the Vine and Branches –

To tell us that there are both in the church:

There are fruitful and unfruitful branches.

“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned” (John 15:2-6).

If we're trusting Jesus –

If we're justified by Him –

If we're abiding in Him –
We will bear good/useful fruit:
We will do what He calls us to do.

If that's what we're doing,
The Father will prune us –
From time to time,
Through trials –
So that we'll bear even more fruit –
So that we'll become more obedient.

This not only brings glory/honor to Him,
It also proves –
To ourselves and others –
That we are His disciples (v. 8).

On the other hand,
If we don't bear good/useful fruit –
But useless –
If there's no sanctification,
Because we're not really connected to Jesus –
There's no justification –
We're not saved.

When the Father comes looking for fruit
And finds none,
He will prune us off –
Remove us from His church –

If we don't repent,
Trust in Jesus,
And begin to obey Him,
His angels will gather us up
On that final day,
Along with the rest of the wicked,
And throw us into the lake of fire,
Where we will be burned.

Jesus certainly had
The scribes and Pharisees in mind
When He said this –
He wanted His disciples to know
Whom they were to avoid.

But He also wanted them
To judge their own lives.

We should take a step back
And look at ours.

What do we see?
A useful life or useless?
Obedience or disobedience?

The fruit of the Spirit:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23).

Or that of the flesh, “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (vv. 19-21).

Jesus points more particularly

To the fruit of our lips: what we say,

“For his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart” (Luke 6:45).

Are our words edifying –

Are they Christ-like –

Do they build up those around us –

Or do they tear them down?

Now we need to be careful here:

No matter how sanctified we are,

We still fall far short of perfection –

The deeds of the flesh

Will still be in us to some degree.

Jesus is speaking about the overall pattern of our lives:

If we’re a good tree –

If we have a good heart –

We will practice righteousness –

If we’re a bad tree –

If we have an evil heart –

We’ll practice sin.

John writes, “Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God

practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:7-10).

We need to apply this same test to others:

Whom should we receive

As a brother or sister in the Lord,

Or see as one we should evangelize?

Consider how they're living.

We need to be careful here as well:

Even unbelievers may sometimes look

Like they have the fruits of the Spirit –

Only God can see the heart –

But if they continually

Bear useless fruit –

We should seek to bring them to Jesus.

May the Lord give us grace

To be wise fruit inspectors. Amen.

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