

(Luke 6:43~45)

Here we find Jesus still warning his disciples of the Scribes and Pharisees, and to do so, he draws a principle from creation... This was often the case in his teachings; he'd point to a principle found in creation, a truth that is seen in that which was made, to explain a spiritual truth about God or man. Here, Jesus points to a "truth" contained in His creation, that of trees and the fruit they bear.

⁴³For a good tree brings not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. ⁴⁴For every tree is known by his own fruit.

Jesus makes a simple observation... A "good" tree is simply that, a good, healthy tree. While a "corrupt" tree refers to a "bad" tree, a tree that is "dead." The word literally translates, "rotten", "worthless". Given that, the point is very simple, if the fruit is good, then you know the tree is good. If the fruit is bad, then you know the tree is bad.

Simple enough right? True, right? He goes on to add, *⁴⁴For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.* That is to say, that the type of fruit produced, bears witness to what kind of tree it is. Thorns don't produce figs...fig tree's produce figs! And bramble bushes don't produce grapes...grape vines produce grapes!

The point here is very simple...⁴⁴"You shall know the tree by the fruit it bears!" The fruit is in direct proportion to the condition of the tree. Therefore, by simply looking at the "Fruit", you can tell both the "kind of tree it is," and know the condition of the tree, whether it be good or bad.

(Vs 45) Now Jesus takes that principle, and applies it to men...*⁴⁵ A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*

Jesus declares, by listening to a man long enough, and you'll know what kind of man he is. The "Fruit of his lips" will reveal the condition of his heart. *"Out of the abundance of the heart...his mouth speaks."* Now, it's critical that we fully understand what Jesus is saying here. That being, it is the "Fruit of his lips," and not the "Fruit of his hands" that determines the "kind of man" he is! That is to say, you cannot tell what kind of man he is, solely based on what he does, based on his deeds. Because "outwardly," he may have the appearance of being a righteous man, by what he gives himself too. Which is the whole point Jesus is trying to make here. Here, Jesus is still warning his disciples of the Scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day. He is telling them, how they can know who is truly "of God" and who is not! These men adhered to the Laws of God, they participated in the various activities of the worship associated with the Temple, these men lived "morally clean" lives... All of which resulted in, at least, an "outward appearance" of being men of God. But it is here, that Jesus warns his disciples, not to be "fooled" by "outward appearances!" But rather, teaches, to truly know what kind of man, a man is, they should close their eyes, and listen...*for out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks!*

The "Words" that come out of a man, reveal *the true condition of the heart!*

A man's "Words" are like "Fruit on a tree," and based on what kind of fruit is produced, determines what kind of tree it is!

⁴⁵A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

Jesus is referring to of course, to the "Inner Man"...the part of a man, not *visible* to the human eye.

Every man is made up of two parts, the outer man, the man that others see us to be, and the inner man, the man that we are. Both of these SHOULD be the same, but tragically, that's not always the case. Every now and again, you meet someone who is not what they appear to be. Which is what Jesus is trying to teach His disciple here in this passage. Here he is warning His disciples, that the Scribes and Pharisees are not what they appear to be. They proclaim to be "*men of God*," men who love God and serve God...yet, the "Fruit" they bear, (*the words coming out of their mouth*) reveals something quite different.

He is referring to of course, the fact these men judged and condemned their fellow man. Jesus had just explained to his disciples, how that God is merciful, full of compassion, generous and kind, to both the good and the evil, to the just and unjust, to the thankful and unthankful. Rather than judge and condemn his enemies, God shows love to His enemies! Given that, he says, anybody that serves Him ought to manifest the same kind of spirit! They too should be merciful, for God is merciful! But not these guys. Though they may have attended synagogue regularly, and though they may have conformed their lives to the teaching of God's word, the words out of their mouth revealed, they didn't have a clue who God was! The fact these men judged and condemned their fellow man, revealed that they were anything but godly! In spite of their claims, in spite of what they professed to be...the "*Fruit of their lips*" **bore** witness that they yet *walked in darkness*, and were "*Spiritually blind*!" They may have outwardly showed signs of being the children of God, but inwardly, they manifested they were of their father, the devil! For the words of their lips revealed that of a dark, depraved, **unchanged heart**.

Metaphorically speaking, that's exactly what Jesus is saying in verse 44...*⁴⁴For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.*

Figs and grapes were often cultivated together and were two of the most common agricultural products in Palestine. Thus his point would be readily understood. You won't find such luscious, sweet fruits such as figs or grapes on a thorn bush! Both of those terms are very similar, they both speak of a desert plant. Figs are found on a fig tree, and grapes are found on a grape vine. Thus, when the "Fruit" and the "Tree" don't match...*you know there's a problem!* When the fruit don't coincide with kind of tree it's suppose to be, *you know something's not right*. Beware of that tree!

Like all "*Spiritual Truths*," it teaches that we cannot trust in merely what we "*SEE*" with these eyes! (For we walk by "*Faith*" and **not by SIGHT**) What is SEEN cannot be trusted. The principle that Jesus is teaching here, is simply that it is *a man's character that determines what kind of man he is*, not what he wears or what he does, or how he acts in front of people.

It's been said, **A man's character is defined by what makes him laugh, and what makes him cry!** It is not necessarily what a man does, or what he doesn't do, what he wears or doesn't wear, how he acts or doesn't act...that defines what kind of man he is. But rather, it is the "*Character of the man*" that determines what kind of man he is! For there are some really "Good Men" out there, as far as doing good things, standing for what is right and moral. But if you listen closely, the "*words*" of those same men will bear witness that they have a dark, unchanged heart, by the way they despise and condemn those out here dying in their sin. For those who are ignorant to scripture, these men might even appear righteous by such a stance, by standing against thieves, standing against homosexuals, standing against adulterers and such. Separating themselves from them, distancing themselves from them, having nothing to do with them, other than judging and condemning them! According to this passage, a man with that kind of fruit, bears

witness that he is oblivious to his own sin and his own wretchedness. A man bearing that kind of fruit bears witness that he yet possess a dark, unchanged heart!

In Matthew's account of this same teaching, he adds something Jesus said, that Luke fails to mention.

¹⁷*Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*

¹⁹*Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

There's no doubt in my mind, this is a play on words... Now I know that, (*being hewn down*) speaks of Judgment...and that (*cast into the fire.*) refers to being cast into Hell. But I'm convinced it has a more personal significance to these men Jesus is talking about.

It was no secret, the Jews HATED their Gentile neighbors... I'm not sure hate is a strong enough word, "*They despised the ground they walked on*"...**literally!** Any Jew, who had traveled outside the borders of Israel, when coming back home, would stop at the border, and *shake the dust off of his sandals*. The reason for this, they considered the land of Israel, Holy Ground, and did not want to defile it with the dirt of surrounding nations! It was a sign of rejection, a sign of disgust. Knowing this tradition, Jesus turns it around on them and tells his disciples to do the same to every Jew that rejects them!

(Mt. 10:14~15) ¹⁴*And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, **shake off the dust of your feet.** ¹⁵Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment, than for that city.*

Well, in a similar way, Jesus' statement here in Matthew, about "*the tree that brings not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire,*" appears as another one of those things. It was commonly said, by the Jews, speaking of the Gentiles, that "*they were good for nothing, other than fire wood for the flames of hell!*"

That sounds awful, I know, but I'm telling you, the same thing is still going on in our day, just maybe not as bold. There's many all around America, within the walls of the church this morning, saying the same thing, just in a little different way. There are people by the thousands that will leave the worship service this morning, quote "*the righteousness,*" who will judge and condemn their neighbors, running down those out here not like us, the holy people of God! Distancing themselves from them, wanting nothing to do with them. Making comments like, "*he or she is about as worthless as they come!*" Treating them like a piece of trash! *The same ones*...that Jesus loved so much, that he endured the suffering of the cross!

It is such a vile and contemptible perception of sinners, that Jesus is talking about here! You shall know the tree by the fruit that it bears! And to SEE sinners that way, regardless of how vile they are, only proves you are "*blind*" and *no nothing of God!* Your self-righteousness has blinded you into thinking you're something! You're something alright, you are the very tree that Jesus is describing here as being corrupt. One that is rotten and worthless! You may "*think*" that "*they*" are the ones who deserve to "*burn in hell,*" but my friend, it is you who are rotten and will be cut down and cast into the fires of hell!

God loves SINNERS... He is kind and merciful to those who hate him, those who persecute him... He is good to the evil, and the unthankful! Given that, His children will be manifest as those who bear the same fruit! Thus the old adage is true, "*The apple doesn't fall far from the tree!*" You shall know the tree, by the fruit it bears!