

Gospel of Matthew “False Prophets and Bad Trees”
Matthew 7:16-20
September 25, 2022

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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.

Scripture highlights false prophets’ activity and presence.

Acts 20:29-31

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.

Jude 1:4

4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

False prophets look like other Christians but eventually give themselves away.

How do you discern a false prophet?

Matthew 7:13-14

13 “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy[a] that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

Doctrine.

Galatians 1:6-8

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

Is faith in Christ alone encouraged?

1 John 4:1-3

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

Life comes to us through the cross.

A false teacher misses a life under the cross.

Romans 12:2

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.

1 Peter 1:14-15

14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,

False teachers hope to reach many without distinguishing between life and destruction.

“If you ever sit under a ministry where there is more sin than grace, more law than Christ, and more command than enabling, then that is false ministry.” - Sinclair Ferguson

Disposition.

Our lives ultimately reveal our theology.

1 Thessalonians 2:5-8

5 For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed— God is witness. 6 Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. 7 But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. 8 So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

Good teachers are revealed in what they affectionately want *for* you not from you.

Jesus reveals his affection for us as our good Shepherd (John 10).

Grow Group Discussion Questions

- What did God say to you during our Sunday gathering?
- Describe your experience with false teachings? Was it overtly anti-Christian?

- Have you ever sat under a teacher that made the narrow gate more broad or made the gospel hard to find? What is the fruit of that teaching?
- Explain what Jesus means when he talks about trees bearing fruit and false teachers? Why does do you think Jesus uses this analogy?
- Read 1 Thessalonians 5:2-21. How do we “test everything?”
- What are the possible outcomes of a church in which the doctrine is sound but the disposition and character of the leadership isn't? Why are both doctrine and disposition important?
- Discuss within your Grow Group what being better equipped in doctrine might look like?
- Is there permission to help one another in conduct and character? When does this get uncomfortable for us?
- Pray for our church, it's leadership, and for good fruit to be produced.