

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Ye Shall Know Them by Their Fruits"

July 29, 2012

Sermon Text: Matthew 7:15-23

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits: Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."

Fellow Redeemed in Christ,

As Christians we must be on constant guard against the so-called wisdom of this world which attacks the Truth of God's Word and our faith in that Truth. These attacks on the Truth are born of the Devil himself. As the Devil is a liar and the father of all lies, we need to be aware that he is more than ready and willing to twist the Word of God in his perverse attempts to bring you to sin and to destroy your faith life.

That most of these attacks should come from people who claim with their mouths to be Bible believing Christians should come as no surprise to us. We can turn on our televisions or radios and readily find any number of these false teachers and prophets, subverting the Truth with the world's wisdom.

Some of these who profess to be Christians teach that infants are without sin until they are old enough to know right from wrong. Rejecting Psalm 51:5 where we read the Psalmist crying to God:

"Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me."

They hold that infants have no need of Baptism; the very Means of Grace God uses to grant that child forgiveness of sins, work faith in that child's heart and bring forth in that baby, through the Holy Spirit, a newness of life in Christ Jesus. They reject the admonition of Christ to His disciples of all times to suffer the little ones (babes in arms) to come to Him and forbid them not because of such is the kingdom of Heaven.

Still others who claim to be Christians teach a philosophy of a (quote) "basic goodness of man", of something worthy of redemption within mankind's nature. These falsely teach that God does not hate and condemn unregenerate man on account of his sin, but only hates the sin. They refuse to believe in the Just God of the Bible, creating for themselves a god that would never punish man for his evil.

Such people who embrace these worldly philosophies reject what God plainly teaches in His Holy Word concerning Original Sin and God's righteous judgment and condemnation of man on account of his sins.

They believe they can pick and choose what portions of Scripture they will believe based on their own human understanding. Presuming to supplant God's Wisdom with the world's wisdom and their own learned philosophies, they present themselves as knowing better than God.

We need to be aware that we may receive very subtle invitations to join in the acceptance of the perversion of God's Word from those who call themselves Christians.

Yes, they outwardly claim and may indeed on the surface appear to be Christians. They will even approach you with claims of having discovered scripture passages, which prove such worldly wisdom and philosophies. But be on your guard! They are actually mortal enemies of God and thus the servants of the devil in procuring for him the destruction of your souls!

Our Lord Jesus Christ describes these false prophets as "ravening wolves" disguised in sheep's clothing. They come to us dressed as one of God's own, pretending to be motivated by the best of intentions and claiming to want to help you, but in rejecting the Truth of God's Word and accepting the wisdom of the world, they have deceived themselves and in reality are the devils agents sent to deceive you!

Let us not be deceived into accepting any such false teachers with their perversion of the Truth, (regardless of who they are or what scholastic degrees they may possess) but rather, let us deal with them according to what God's Word teaches.

Today, on the basis of God's Word, let us examine

- Firstly: How we can recognize these false teachers,
- Secondly: How we are to deal with these false teachers, and
- Thirdly: What is the end of all such false teachers.

(Prayer) Heavenly Father by Your Spirit, sanctify us through thy Truth, Thy Word is Truth. Amen.

Our Lord begins His warning to us in our texts "Beware of false prophets!" Take yourselves away from and have nothing to do with false teachers. For it is spiritual foolishness to entertain their worldly philosophies. They deliberately twist the Word to entice you away from the Truth. Their purpose and their most unholy mission, regardless of the lies they will tell you concerning their intentions, is to create doubt within your mind and entrap you in a denial of the Truth. If they can accomplish this, they will have succeeded in feeding your soul enough spiritual poison that you may well begin to doubt even the most fundamental of Christian doctrines. Spiritual poison and cancer, if tolerated, slow acting though it may be, never stops growing and multiplying error upon error until it has consumed the greater portion of a visible church body.

Jesus tells us In our text that we, as believers, can recognize these false teachers. He says we shall know them by their fruits. That is, by what, they teach. Not only does Jesus say we can know them, but it is implied here that He also expects us to be able to recognize them.

Make it your goal to become well grounded in the Christian doctrines taught in all their truth and purity in the Bible. Don't be satisfied with what any individual has to say concerning any Christian doctrine. We are told in First John 4: 1

"Beloved, believe not every spirit. But try the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

You have available to you the infallible Word of God, the Bible, It is not here to simply be an ornament on your coffee table for your guests to see! Use it! Use It Alone as the Rule and Standard to test all teachings of all individuals, your pastor included; but especially use it to test what a member of any church which tolerates or teaches false doctrine is presenting to you as Truth.

Our Lord and Savior tells us in our text that every good tree brings forth good fruit and every corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit and a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit.

No one can harvest grapes from a thorn bush or figs from thistles. Likewise you will not receive good fruit to feed your soul from anyone who continues to embrace and teach any doctrine contrary to the Pure Word of God.

Have you ever bitten into a beautiful red apple, expecting the juicy, healthful goodness its appearance promised, only to find rot or a worm inside? What was your reaction?

You would not willingly eat a piece of fruit, which was rotten and crawling with worms inside, would you?

Such should be your reaction to the rot of sin and worm of corruption infesting the worldly philosophies of false teachers. Never mind that what they present to you, with (quote) "good intentions", is lovely to the eye or gives you a warm fuzzy feeling inside. Test it against God's Holy Word, the Only Good Tree, from which only good fruit is freely given for your temporal and eternal life.

Deal with these false teachers, their false teaching and deceitful philosophies as God's Word commands in Romans 16:17

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."

Have nothing to do with these workers of iniquity! Do not receive into your selves their poison, neither bid them God's speed in their endeavors.

Rather, when confronted with such false teachers who present you with their perversion of God's Word, rebuke and reprove them with the Truth. Speak to them only of their disobedience to God and the wrath and punishment of God, which they call down upon themselves by their insidious lies against the Truth!

In presenting them with the full brunt of the Law, you will be showing Christian love for them. You dare not speak of God's love for them in Christ so long as they continue such false teaching.

To do otherwise would be to comfort them in their sin and to become a partaker of their sin. The Law must first drive such a person to his or her knees in absolute horror and despair at their sin against God before the healing balm of the Gospel is to be applied.

This is the only way in which they might be turned from their sin and spared the fate of all false teachers. As Jesus Himself states in our text:

"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire."

This, indeed, will be the fate of all false teachers. This includes all who publicly profess to believe the Truth, yet teach otherwise than what God's Word teaches. Even those who publicly declare that Jesus is Lord and those who may be seen every Sunday in church publicly expressing an emotional awe and seemingly sincere appreciation for the Gospel, but yet tolerate and teach anything contrary to the Word of God.

For professing the name of Jesus does not gain for oneself salvation. Jesus tells us this in our text. He says:

"Not everyone that saith unto Me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven."

It is not the fact of knowing, nor the act of verbally expressing such knowledge of who Christ is which saves. Even the Devil knew who Jesus was. It is, rather, only through the gift of the Holy Spirit working saving faith in the heart through the Word and Sacraments whereby anyone is saved from the righteous anger and just punishment of God.

Furthermore, it is only through the working of the Holy Spirit that the believers in Christ are given the spiritual strength to carry out the will of The Father in their lives. This includes living one's life in the service to God and one's fellowman. All blessings, both temporal and spiritual, come from God and to Him alone belongs all the glory, praise and honor for our salvation from sin, death and the power of the devil.

The false teachers, on the other hand, of which our text tells us there will be many, shall contend they must somehow merit salvation by having performed wonderful works in the name of Jesus.

Whether these are prophecies, casting out devils, or some other deed, including the preaching and teaching of bits of Truth along side of error; the true nature of these acts will be revealed on the last day, when Christ, the Lord who knows each person's heart, shall come in all His glory to judge both the living and the dead.

One cannot knowingly deny any part of God's Word, no matter what the reasoning, and truly be a Christian.

Whether it is a denial of the clear teaching of Scripture of Original Sin, Infant Baptism, or the turning away from God's wisdom to embrace and teach the world's wisdom in matters such as a woman's role in the family and church, or the issue of self-esteem, whereby a person is said to naturally possess some basic good within and of themselves; to call oneself a Christian and at the same time deny or subvert any clear teaching of Scripture, is the height of deluding oneself and others. Such rejection of the Truth and turning toward the wisdom of this world will avail the false teacher, and those who follow after them, nothing but eternal punishment when they stand before the Lord on the last day.

Jesus says "Many will say to me in that day. Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."

In all their deeds, false teachers merit themselves nothing but the anger, condemnation and everlasting estrangement from Jesus Christ and Heaven. Because they have denied Him and rejected His Word of Truth, the Lord will deny them before His Father. They will be cast into the everlasting fires prepared for the Devil and his messengers.

Let us therefore hold fast to the precious Truth of God's Word. Beware of false teachers and be not dissuaded by human emotions or human reasoning from standing steadfast in ALL the pure teachings of Holy Scripture. They are not only your sure foundation of the forgiveness of your sins and Eternal Salvation, but they are your inheritance, much more costly than any earthly treasure.

Dear Ones, Be on your guard against all those who would rob you of your inheritance in Christ!

And now, may the peace of God, freely given you in the Good Fruit of the forgiveness of all your sins, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.