

June 7, 2009

“Got Fruit?”

Matthew 7:20-21(NLT)

“Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.

"Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter."

Last week we talked about being saved. I said, as the Bible says, you must believe in your heart so that the confession of your mouth will be powerful. Are you living what you profess to believe? We talked about Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. When the people asked what they should do...:

Acts 2:38-39 (NLT)

Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins, turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ to show that you have received forgiveness for your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word for “repent” is *metanoesate*, and means “change your outlook” or “change your mind.” This is not just sorrow for wrong doing, but actual change in the way a person thinks. It is a wholehearted change of mind that results in a changed purpose, direction, values...life! Note that Peter not only said repent or turn from you sins, but he also said “turn to God.” It does no good to turn from sin without tuning then to the one who can solve the sin problem.

A person who is saved and is truly a Christian is someone who is turning from sin and turning to God (i.e. repents and believes). That is the person who has the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:9 (NLT)

But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.)

Follow what Paul is saying here, if you do not have the Spirit of Christ living in you, you do not belong to Christ, you are not a Christian. If you are a Christian and therefore do have the Spirit, the evidence is that your life is controlled by the Spirit of God living

in you and not by the sinful nature. If your life is being controlled by the sinful nature how can you belong to Christ? Let me ask again, are you living what you profess to believe?

The evidence that you are a Christian is that your life is controlled by the Spirit of God and not the sinful nature. Jesus said it this way in our text today, "Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter."

Got fruit? "Yes," Jesus says, "just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions." Just before our text Jesus said...

Matthew 7:16-19

Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. ¹⁹ So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire.

You would not expect to get figs from an apple tree would you? Or imaging you see someone near a thorn bush and you ask them if they would pick you some grapes from that thornbush. They would say, "Are you crazy, you can't get grapes from a thorn bush, just as you would not expect to see thorns on a grape vine."

Or suppose you had an apple tree that was bad, it either did not produce fruit year after year, or its fruit was not edible. Maybe it only grew, small, hard apples filled with worms. If someone came with a basket full of beautiful, red, delicious apples and you asked them, "where did you get these apples?" and suppose they said, "I got them off your tree!" You would say, "My tree? No," you'd say, "You did not get those apples off my tree!" Why? because you can't get good fruit for a bad tree.

Jesus said a bad tree does not produce good fruit and a good tree does not produce bad fruit. You know who you are by your fruit, i.e. by your life, your actions. You can say you are a Christian, you can come to church, serve in a church, but how do you live? Some of you are appearing to be Christian but you live unchristian lives. You do what the world does. You do things you know God is not happy with you doing.

This is so important, this is very serious business. Why do you think you are saved? Why do you think you are a Christian? Because you once prayed for Christ to come into your life? Because you were born into a Christian home? Because someone told you you are a Christian? Because you went through the ritual of baptism.? What about these dear children who received their First Holy Communion today?

I grew up making my First Communion and Confirmation, and I had no idea what I was doing or it's significance. All I knew is that I was special for the day and I was going to make some money. I'm not blaming the church. I'm sure they taught me of it's significance but I wasn't listening. And even if I understood that might only mean I understood in my head, but didn't have the reality in my heart.

I grew up believing I was a Christian while living like the devil. You must live like Jesus not like the devil. Why are you a Christian? The Bible says test yourself to see if you are in the faith. 1 John 2:6 (NLT) - Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.

Are you living your life as Jesus did? You say, "Come on, Pastor, none of us are as perfect as Jesus." Yes, but what is your lifestyle like? What is the inclination or the leaning of your heart? Are you seeking to live like Jesus always pleasing God? Or is sin habitual in your life. I know Christians sin, but when they do God comes looking for them, and when He lays His hand on them or disciplines them they repent, and believe and get back on the path. But too many who consider themselves Christian are doing things they ought not to be doing and it doesn't even bother them. Maybe they think, "well, others do what I do and they call themselves Christian." Don't measure yourself by others, don't even measure yourself by yourself. You say in your heart you believe your Christian even though you sin. Listen, you can't trust your heart, the bible says the heart is deceitful who can know it.

James 2:14, 17-20-15 (NLT)

What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? ... So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.

Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." But I say, "How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds."

You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. How foolish! Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless?

If society is to be awakened one day from its deep slumber, it will only be done by Christians who have first woken up themselves to the full splendor of their privilege and who have taken seriously the call to live wholly and entirely for God.

- Maurice Roberts

A Christian is someone who is serious about living there wholly and entirely for God. A person who is Christian and truly saved is seeking to live like Jesus, and when they fail, God comes after them, and they do what they did at first, they repent and believe or they turn from sin and turn to God and get back on the right path. A good tree may have a bad fruit here and there but ultimately the fruit is good.

Listen again to Christ's warning: "Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter."

Jesus went on to say in....

Matthew 7:22-23 (NLT)

On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'

Jesus is exposing those who looked religious, sounded religious and did religious things, but they did not know Him personally. He says to them, "I never knew you." They did not have His Spirit, they were not controlled by His Spirit, how do we know that? Because Jesus said they break God's laws.

Salvation is a gift of God, received through faith, but as James said, the proof of real faith is holy actions, but professed faith and no action is not a faith that can save you.

Test yourself to see if you are in the faith. Are you living like Jesus? Are you controlled by the Holy Spirit? Got fruit? Is it good fruit?