

## **Sermon for the 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity. 7/30/23**

First Lesson: Proverbs 11:24-31 (King James Version)

There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.

The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.

He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.

He that trusteth in his riches shall fall; but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be servant to the wise of heart.

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.

Second Lesson: Matthew 7: 15-21 (King James Version)

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.

## INTRODUCTION

Growing up in Southeast Idaho, our family attended church every Sunday at St. Andrew's Episcopal church. My father, a devout Anglican, demanded and directed all of us to serve in some capacity. My father was a Eucharistic Lay Reader, my mother sang in the choir and my brother and I served as acolytes and priest servers. I was raised to respect the sanctity of the church and all the ways we worshiped God. As a young boy, however, I didn't always understand the meaning of things and the powerful personal relevance that each area of church meant and signified.

One Sunday, I think I was seven or eight years old, after we had arrived home from church, I had several hours to kill before we had supper. I distinctly remember grabbing the bulletin we had brought home and looking at my younger sister and saying, "Hey let's go play church." My father's booming voice shook the walls. What???! He proceeded to sit me down on the couch and explain to me that one must never, ever play church. I remember his stern lecture as he proceeded to explain why we worship and glorify God, why the actions and words we say are reverent and important. He left an impression deep inside of me and from that day forward I took church more seriously and tried to focus on being respectful in God's house.

### **False Prophets will appear in disguise, appearing meek but are dangerous predators. (V.15)**

Our reading today from Matthew talks about the dangers of false prophets and that they "come to you in sheep's clothing but inward they are ravaging wolves." These types of false prophets have been present since the beginning of religion. They were with the pagans and Jewish people, they spread false teachings during the time that Jesus preached and are present today in our society. Some of the key attributes to being a false prophet is that they taught things that glorified themselves or their human desires and did not represent the true Word of God.

## **False prophets will be revealed by what they want from people. (V.16)**

Jesus was very clear in his admonishing these types of people. He knew that they could maintain clever disguises, and often play the part of someone who has something profound to say. They would tell people what they wanted to hear, and not the truth that they needed to hear. In Paul's second letter to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:2-4) he tells Timothy to "preach the word and reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves, teachers, having itching ears."

Jesus states, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." In other words, by what they offer you in exchange for your attention. Jesus asks, "Do men gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles?" It is when you see the fruits that they are delivering that you can identify them.

In our world today many television preachers or people who claim to speak the Word of God are false prophets. They sugar coat the message so that the people listening will hear exactly what they want to hear and do not feel uncomfortable, or they offer the promise of God's favor in exchange for donated money, a promise they cannot keep. In the Second Epistle of Peter, He discusses several key attributes of false teachers and the ways they will try to isolate you. (2 Peter 2:1) They will try to isolate you to secretly introduce destructive heresies. They work secretly because the deceptive nature of their teaching is hidden. They offer false visions, false revelations, and a false messiah. They make up their own message that creates false hope, false security, and false peace. They follow their impulses rather than the Word of God. (2 Peter 2:2) They often follow the whim of society and depart from the essential doctrines or beliefs of the church concerning Jesus Christ all the while allowing their greed and love of money to drive their practices. (2 Peter 2:3)

In reading through the Gospels, the message Jesus preached was not an easy one to hear in terms of our behavior and our human desire to feed the flesh, resist the temptations of the world and the lure of the Devil. Keeping the commandments is extremely difficult and requires diligence, focus and prayer. We know that it is impossible to live the Christian life by ourselves and only through the grace of God and the help of Jesus can we attain it. Listening to someone tell you that it is ok to

cherry pick the Word of God and only apply the areas you feel you can attain might seem to be a fair and just practice, certainly a practice that appeals to our capacity to sin. The reality is quite the opposite. The commandments of God and the words that Jesus preached are vital to our salvation and eternal life. We must not try to alter them, to redefine them, sugar coat them or lessen their impact or significance.

**Believing in the Gospel and living in accordance with God's Word brings good things, but not doing so and defying the Word of God will bring about evil consequences. (V 17-19)**

“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.” The Word of God is truth and those who live by it, preach it and humbly and sincerely believe it, will bring forth good actions that are pleasing to God. Those who do not believe it is truth, those who alter or act in ways that contradict or act in blasphemy to it will bring forth evil fruit. Jesus is clear when he describes the fate of the tree that brings forth evil fruit. “It shall be hewn down and cast into the fire.”

### **Action**

So how can we identify and discern those who are true prophets of the Word of God from those who are not? If we Study the Word of God, pray daily and come to church these truths will become a part of who we are. When Fr. Chris recites the decalogue ask yourself how you fall short on each area and what you could do differently. Know what the prayer book teaches and what the Creeds say about what we believe. When I was in High School, I had a friend tell me that God, Jesus, and the Holy spirit were three separate beings. Three unique Gods. I assumed he had a misguided interpretation of the Trinity but after further discussion he reiterated his belief in three separate deities. He was a friend of mine, but I knew he was wrong. The Nicene Creed is clear in that regard, stating “I believe in one God, the Father Almighty”. Knowing what right theology is, what is truly the Word of God and what glorifies Him is great armor against the actions or persuasions of false prophets.

We come to church every week and many of us pray the daily offices of Morning and Evening prayer each day. We humbly kneel at the altar and receive communion, reminding us that Christ sacrificed His life so our sins could be

forgiven, and we could receive the gift of eternal life with Him. We say the Apostles and Nicene creeds, we sing the hymns that remind us of what being a Christian is all about.

It is also the way we conduct ourselves on the other days of the week that people will notice. It will be our actions, and doing what is pleasing to God and what glorifies Him that will separate us from those who do not. Jesus states in the final verse of our lesson today, "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." (V. 21)

### **Conclusion**

Jesus said in Matthew 5:14, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." What people say really doesn't tell you much about them or their motives. Often it tells you what they want you to think or do, but it doesn't tell you what kind of character they possess or what their motives are. Watching how they behave, how they speak and most importantly how they treat other people will give you great insight into what drives them and what they believe to be the truth.

In this world there are many who would try to persuade us that God is not real, sin is not a big deal and that they have an alternative answer to how to get through life. Beware of those messages and ignore what you know is not the truth. Use all the resources you have available, our church family, the prayer book, and the bible to strengthen your resolve and faith.

From our reading from the Book of Proverbs today (11:27)

"He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him."

I pray every day that everything I do will glorify God and that while I know I will fall short, I trust God to help me move in the right direction. I hope that you too will remember this and stay strong in your faith and trust in the Word of God to be the truth and live in accordance with His will.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, AMEN.