

The Eighth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 7:15-23
July 25th, 2021
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

A Good Tree Cannot Bear Bad Fruit

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Almighty and Everlasting God, Who of Thine infinite mercy hast made us Thy children by faith in Thy dear Son, and through Him hast begotten us again unto a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us: we beseech Thee, put into our hearts the Spirit of Thy Son, that He may even now enable us to cry, Abba, Father, and make us blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ; through the same Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Lord + Jesus warns us today to beware of false prophets. What is a false prophet? A false prophet is someone that takes the Word of God and twists it to their own nefarious purposes. In short, a false prophet is a liar. They are not actually preaching the Word of God, for they distort the word to make it say what it does not actually say. Our Lord tells us, however, that a false prophet is easy to spot. For one can see that they are a false prophet by their works; by the fruit that they produce. A bad tree cannot bear good fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit. We can tell a false prophet by the fruit they produce.

Now this does not mean that a true prophet is without sin, or that a false prophet never shows any virtues. This is not how things in this world work. The wolf comes to devour the sheep wearing a sheep skin outfit. The false prophet can be perceived to be a very winsome and charming fellow. He may be the type of person who everybody flocks to; the man everyone wants to be. The true prophet may even be the opposite. He may not be the most winsome of persons. He may be a man who not many people like. He may be the type of person nobody wants to be around. Well, if this is true; if a false prophet may appear to be friendly and warm and a true prophet stand offish and rude, how can one tell who is the true prophet and who is the false prophet?

Our Lord + Jesus tells us that that will be shown us by their fruit. In other words, it is determined by their preaching. A false prophet preaches the things of this world. They preach that only those who are blessed with physical blessings are truly blessed by the Lord God. They preach the lies of this world. They say that what the Lord God says is wrong, is not wrong. They preach certain sins that people commit are okay, because the society says they are okay. They praise abortion and homosexuality, and every fashionable philosophical trend that this society and world promotes. They make the Lord God out to be a liar, because they twist what He says into something false. The fruit that they produce is contrary to everything the Lord God teaches in His holy Scripture. If a preacher is promoting the sins and philosophies of this world, they are a false prophet. On account of this one can tell that they are false prophets because of their fruit; because of their preaching. A bad tree cannot produce good fruit, for it is rotten to the core.

A false prophet also preaches salvation in one's works. If they make any part of salvation dependent upon something that we do, then they are distorting the Word of God; they are destroying the gospel. Any gospel that is not one hundred percent dependent upon the works and merits of the Lord + Jesus Christ alone is no gospel at all. For it leaves one to doubt whether one is truly saved. Whether one has truly done enough; believed enough; good worked enough. Therefore, these false prophets can be seen by their fruits, because they salvation out of hands of our Lord + Jesus. Saying that the Lord has done this much, and now we must complete it in some way is no gospel at all. It is not good news if we have to drum up in ourselves some work that must be accomplished. This is why many false prophets are well loved, for people love to have some part in their salvation. People love to be given a laundry list of easy things that they can do in order to win favor from the Lord God, so that they may pat themselves on the back and congratulate themselves for being such good people. The false prophet that gives them this, is praised by these people because they are given exactly what they want, and not what they need. We can tell the false prophets by their fruits; by their preaching.

The true prophets of the Lord can also be seen by their fruit; by their preaching. They give us the works and merits of the Christ alone. They are not afraid to preach against the sins of this world that this world and society loves to praise as a virtuous lifestyle even though it is a mortal sin committed by the person and in whom the Holy Ghost cannot dwell, for the Holy Ghost cannot dwell in those who are willfully and openly impenitent and sinful. On account of this, that they actually preach the Law and condemn sins and the sinner that commits them, and because they take our salvation out of our hands completely and place it solely in the hands of the Lord + Jesus, they are probably not well liked. Nobody likes to hear that they are a sinner. The true prophets of the Lord God do not like to preach the Law—no sane person ever really does—to those who need to hear it, especially when it comes to preaching against specific sins to specific individuals. But even though they do not like to preach the Law; even though they do not like saying things that will make them disliked even more, they do it, because that is what the Lord God would have them do.

So, we see the true prophets by their fruit. No good tree can bear bad fruit. It must act according to its nature. For the true prophets of the Lord God, their nature is shaped and formed by the Lord God Himself through the holy Word that He has given to them to preach and proclaim in all of its truth and purity. The good tree cannot bear bad fruit because its root is found in the perfect tree of life. The Lord + Jesus is the perfect tree of life. He bears perfect fruit. No bad fruit can come from Him. Only good fruit can come from Him. The true prophets bear good fruit because the seed of their tree comes from the fruit produced by the perfect tree of life—the Lord + Jesus.

The true prophets bear good fruit because they created from the seed that the Christ produced through His suffering and death on the tree of the holy cross. The Holy Ghost is sent out by the Lord + Jesus to create and sustain faith in all those who hear the pure preaching of the Word of God; all those who hear the true harsh reality of their sins on account of their transgression of the Law of God. The harsh reality of the Law is that there is no one living, no not one that is good. All have sinned and fallen short of fulfilling the Law. But the pure preaching of the Word of the Lord God also proclaims that there is One Who has perfectly fulfilled the Law on our behalf. It is the Lord + Jesus Who came down from Heaven to take upon Himself our flesh, and suffer our punishment on the tree of the holy cross, so that He might give to us the Holy Ghost Who leads us into all truth through the pure preaching of the Word of God. The true prophets of the Lord God direct us solely to this Christ, for since he has also directed our ears to the wrath and displeasure that we deserve on account of our manifold sins, he must also open our ears to here that our Lord + Jesus has won forgiveness of our sins for us. This is the only fruit a true prophet of the Lord God can produce. He cannot bear any bad fruit. He cannot give us anything or anyone other than the Lord + Jesus and His works and merits.

The false prophets of this world will draw many away to their destruction with their lies, deception, and winsome personalities. The places of worship of the false prophets will be packed to the rim,

because they give the people just what they want. However, it is only the true prophets of the Lord + Jesus, who cannot bear any bad fruit, give the people only what they need, even though they may seem to be rude, unloving, persons with bad breath and a bad attitude. Even when these things are true the tree is still good, for the tree still only bears good fruit. It only preaches into the ears of the faithful exactly what they need—the Lord + Jesus and His works and merits alone. This is how much the true prophets of the Lord care for the sheep entrusted to them. They are willing to endure the griefs and sorrows that come with preaching the truth, so that those who are given to them may hear the good news from their lips, and they may be saved from all their sins.

Good trees cannot bear bad fruit. So then, those who hear the pure preaching from the lips of the good tree, will also bear good fruit, for the seed that has created them into a lively faith, has come from the pure preaching of the Word of God, and from the right administration of the Blessed Sacraments. Let us therefore, my dear friends, ever be diligent in attending to the hearing of pure preaching of the Word of God, for it produces in us the good fruit of faith in which we are able to cling intently to the works and merits of the Christ for our salvation. Grant this Lord unto us all. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty and Gracious God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hast commanded us to pray that Thou wouldest send forth laborers into Thy harvest: of Thine infinite mercy give us true teachers and ministers of Thy Word, and put Thy saving Gospel in their hearts and on their lips, that they may truly fulfill Thy command, and preach nothing contrary to Thy holy Word, that we, being warned, instructed, nurtured, comforted, and strengthened by Thy heavenly Word, may do those things which are well-pleasing to Thee, and profitable to us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!