



-- Read Luke 6:43-49

-- Pray

-- Introduction

-- Koy finding seeds in the attic in a newspaper dated Dec. 30, 1906

-- He had no idea what kind of seeds they were, so he planted them to see.

-- Just this week, the fruit is beginning to show, and those seeds appear to have been pumpkin seeds.

-- We see in our passage that the same thing is true with fruit trees. It is hard to tell what the tree is until you see its fruit.

-- Name That Fruit Tree Quiz

As you can see, it can be very difficult to tell one tree from another—that is, until they bear their fruit. Just now, when we looked at pictures of fruit trees without their produce, most of us had no idea what kind of tree they were. However, one quick glance of the fruit itself, and we could instantly and accurately identify the difference.

Thus, the ultimate point here—both of the remarkable tale of Koy’s pumpkin seeds and of the “Name That Fruit Tree Quiz”—is that we really do not know what we have until we see the fruit. And this is precisely the comparison we hear Jesus making in our verses this morning. Look with me again at verse 43, where Jesus declares, *“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit.”* Just as we have seen, a tree is most easily recognized, not by its leaves or its trunk or its bark, but by the fruit that it produces. Yet, as Jesus makes this point about trees, He is not really concerned about agriculture; His concern is about human hearts. In verse 45, Jesus reveals to us the real reason why He makes this observation about fruit trees, saying, *“The*

good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart.”

In essence what Jesus tells us in these verses—and in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders that follows—is that in each of our lives, there is an undeniable connection between our roots and our fruit. In other words, our speech and behavior (the fruit of our lives) reveal the true condition of our hearts (the root of our lives). And in case we missed that point, Jesus makes it more explicit in verse 45, saying, *“For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”* Considering these powerfully insightful words of Christ, I want to close our exposition of Luke’s account of the Sermon on the Mount with two final points, the first of which is this:

1.) Our behavior is the barometer of our hearts.

-- Snake in a Bag

Imagine the reactions we would see among each other if I let this snake loose among you in this sanctuary today. Imagine the different words that we would say... (examples) ... Even though we would all be affected by exactly the same event, we would likely react to it in drastically different ways... (examples) ... Therefore, the event itself cannot be blamed for our bad behavior nor can it be credited for the good, because it would be exactly the same event that caused us all to behave differently, for better or for worse. (It is not a real snake by the way).

So what is going on here then? Why is it that we do the things that we do and why do we say the things that we say?

Why is... your child so obstinate... your spouse so cranky... your friend so discouraged? Why is your teenager so obsessed with the opinions of her peers? And why on earth is a husband willing to risk his family for a few minutes of sexual pleasure? We could ask these questions with regard to the church as well. For example, why are some church members so actively involved and others keep watching from the cheap seats? How come some Christians express such irresistible joy, yet others can’t seem to stop complaining? Why do we do the things we do?

Well, in our passage today, Jesus tells us why. And He makes the point most directly in verse 45, where He declares, *“The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart.”* Why, then, do we do what we do and say what we say?

The simplest, most biblical answer is the heart. Just as surely as the roots of a good tree will produce good fruit, so, too, the roots of a briar patch will produce briars. Just as surely as a heart rooted in Christ will produce Christlike actions, so also will a heart rooted in the world produce worldliness. Out of the overflow of our hearts will our mouths speak and our bodies act.

Now, our flesh does all it can to refute this simple principle of Christ. We try to convince ourselves that we are really not at fault for our ungodly behavior. “We are victims,” we say, “of our environment or our upbringing or our biology.” We really don’t want to call anything a sin, so we say it is a sickness or a disease. And, please don’t get me wrong, we do live in a terribly fallen world, and the sins of others can absolutely have profoundly poisonous effects on our lives. Furthermore, some psychological terminology, such as identifying the condition of alcoholism, has some merit and it can be quite helpful.

Nevertheless, calling it “alcoholism” doesn’t make drunkenness any less of a sin, and calling it a “natural masculine urge” doesn’t make adultery any less offensive to God. Surely, our environment, our upbringing, our biology, and many other factors can have great impact upon our lives. However—and hear this—Jesus is telling us in this text that these external factors are absolutely not our core problem. No, He tells us quite clearly that sin is born in our hearts.

The Apostle James echoes this teaching in James 1:13-15, where he writes, “*When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*”

Just as Jesus is indicating, so declares the Book of James: It is desire in the heart that gives birth to sin. Notice how intentionally James sets out to eliminate every other possibility. In verse 13 he says, “*When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’*” In other words, we shouldn’t attempt to blame our behavior on anything that could be attributed to God, such as our biology or the different circumstances of your life that He has allowed to come our way. James goes on to say, *but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.* What, then, is the ultimate root of our sins? It is the evil desires of our hearts.

Therefore, the ultimate point that Jesus is making through this analogy is that there is an undeniable and organic relationship between our roots and our fruit. He

is imploring us to stop blaming other people and external circumstances for unholy behavior and to start examining our hearts. Christ is calling us to recognize that external circumstances do not *determine* our speech and behavior; rather, they merely provide occasions for our behavior to *divulge* our hearts, for, as He says, our behavior is simply the overflow of our hearts.

Understanding this truth means that we can no longer blame our sinful words and actions on anyone else. It calls us to stop saying things like, “Oh, he makes me so crazy!” or “This traffic is driving me insane!” or “I was just tired, I guess.” On the contrary, this biblical understanding of behavior urges us to ask the following critically important question that you have probably heard me asking before, which is this: What do I want so much that I am willing to sin to get it or sin because I am not getting it?” We are so very blessed to ask, “What desire of my heart makes me behave like this?” Now that is a question aimed at real change.

Our Lord’s teaching about behavior here also has stunning consequences for parenting as well, doesn’t it? While we could do an entire sermon series on this point, let me quickly make just a couple of points about parenting in light of this truth. Christ’s words here tell us that merely changing a child’s behavior is of very little use if we do not first change the desires that gave birth to that behavior. It informs us that child-rearing should not aim at the fruit, but rather at the root, for if our children’s roots are firmly planted in God’s truth, then the fruit of their lives will be pleasing to Him. Unfortunately, we parents quite often get this backwards, spending all of our efforts on behavior modification and failing to address the sinful desires that gave birth to that behavior in the first place.

Thus, to sum up this first point, we must understand from Christ’s words here that our behavior is best understood as the outward expression of our innermost desires. In other words, we do what we do because we want what we want, and our behavior serves as the most reliable barometer of our hearts.

The second point that we must understand from this text is this:

2.) Obedience is the response of the redeemed.

To introduce this point, I want to lead us through a progression of statements of Jesus in order to emphasize the essential importance of this sermon that we have been studying for the past several weeks. First, in John 14:15, Jesus says, “*If you love me, you will obey what I command.*” Thus, quite clearly stated here is the fact

that genuine love for Christ is revealed not in emotion but in obedience to His commands.

With that in mind, let us turn to Matthew 22:37-39: “*Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’*” Thus, since these are, by Christ’s own assessment, the two greatest commandments... and, since true love for Him is seen in our obedience to what He commands... then, we can be certain that conformity to these two commandments is the highest hallmark of true love for Christ.

Finally, let us recall that Luke’s account of the Sermon on the Mount effectively serves as Christ’s own commentary on what it really means to obey the Great Commandments. Recall that the first seven verses (v. 20-26) describe what it really means to love God with all that we are, and the second section, (v. 27-42), describes what Christ means when He commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Therefore, what we have in those 23 verses is a God-breathed picture of people who sincerely love Christ. What we have in this sermon is Christ’s own depiction of those who are redeemed in His name.

And that is the central point of the verses in focus today. We see it in Christ’s description of trees, roots, and fruit. And we also hear it compellingly pressed upon our consciences in the question Jesus asks in verse 46, where He asks, “*Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?*” This question and the parable Jesus tells to illustrate it are the heart of this entire sermon. That is, these past few weeks of study have all led up to the question He asks in verse 43, saying, “*Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?*”

Jesus then emphasizes the vital importance of this question by telling the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders. And, while we could certainly devote several sermons this parable alone, we are also blessed to take note of its remarkable simplicity. You will notice that there is really one difference—and one difference only—between the wise man and the fool. The difference is not education or erudition or eloquence; nor is it aptitude, attitude, or artistry. No, as Jesus tells us, the single difference between wisdom and foolishness is one outstanding word: obedience. Simply put, the wise are those who not only hear the Word of God, but also do what it says.

In essence, what Jesus is saying here is that we deceive ourselves if we call Him Lord but our lives show little evidence that we are obeying what He commands.

James echoes this teaching when he writes in James 1:22, “*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*” Simply put, if our fruit does not look anything like Christ, then our roots must be planted in something other than Him.

Indeed, I believe that this root and fruit connection is the key to understanding and applying this entire sermon of Jesus as it is recorded in Luke 6:20-49. But let us not be too abstract about it. Rather, allow me to demonstrate how I believe our Lord would have us apply the message of this classic sermon to our lives:

Look with me first at verse 20. Jesus says, “*Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.*” What is the point? Well, if our root actually is a poor spirit, then our fruit simply cannot be self-reliance. If I claim to understand my desperate need for God in every aspect of life, then I should constantly be asking for His help. Can I really claim to be rooted in this truth if I live like I don’t need God? Similarly, if I really understand my spiritual bankruptcy, then I will stop trying to earn my salvation. If my root is a poor spirit, then the fruit of my life will be an unassuming attitude and humble speech. Is your life truly rooted in the spiritual poverty to which Christ calls us or would Jesus say, “Why do you call me Lord and yet your spirit is not poor?”

Are we beginning to see the profound impact that this passage is meant to have on our lives? Are we beginning to understand how accurately our behavior reveals our hearts?

Let us keep going for a moment and take a look at the second beatitude recorded here. In verse 21, Jesus declares, “*Blessed are you who hunger now.*” As we have been discussing, at the very root of authentic Christian living is an insatiable hunger for the righteousness of Christ. And if such hunger really is my root, then there is no way that I will be satisfied by the junk food philosophies and petty pursuits of the world. While I might enjoy some worldly amusements and successes, they will surely seem empty and defunct when compared to the Spirit’s call to put on the holy character of Jesus Christ. If I am truly rooted in a hunger for righteousness, then I will not... I cannot... I must not... be satisfied to linger in my sins. If at my root I am hungry for righteousness, then I will diligently and intentionally seek that righteousness through faithful Bible study, fellowship, and prayer. Does that characterize your life, or would Jesus say, “Why do you call me Lord, and yet you hunger not for righteousness?”

What other questions might come as we progress through this passage? Would Christ be asking us, “Why do you call me Lord, and yet you have so little sorrow over your sin?” Would He say, “Why do you call me Lord, and yet you fear to follow where I lead?” Might He inquire, “Why do you call me Lord, and yet you live to serve yourself?” or “Why do you call me Lord, and yet you will not forgive your brother?” These are just a sample, but a powerful glimpse into the countless root and fruit connections to be found in this passage?

I pray, at this point, that you are getting the picture here. Moreover, I pray that you will spend time this week meditating on these beatitudes through the lens of this root and fruit connection. Let us ask ourselves, “What do these beatitudes reveal about the first and greatest commandment to ‘love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength?’” Then, ask, “Does the fruit of my life manifest a root in these truths or they tell me that my life is rooted in something less than these?”

Furthermore, let us discover what Christ’s words teach about loving our neighbors as ourselves and ask ourselves if our words and actions reveal a heart that is really rooted in selfless love for others. Let us ask ourselves this: What does our obedience of Christ’s commands in this passage say about our love for Him? If you or I were on trial for loving Christ, would there be enough evidence to convict?

Let me ask you: Will you be a wise or foolish builder this morning? As we have been studying this classic sermon of our Lord together, have you just been hearing it, or has your heart encountered it with a resolute determination to do what Christ has commanded? Does the fruit of our lives reveal us to be wise people who obey or fools who merely hear?