

Introduction:

Good Morning...It is great to be here with you this morning...If you do not know who I am, my name is Byron Bradshaw and I am privileged to be the pastor here at Calvary Bible Church...If you are new here and want to get connected...then I recommend seeing me today after the service and I would love to help you connect to the body here at Calvary...

If you have not heard, we have a new dynamic ministry starting today...It is a new Sunday school for young couples, younger people and younger families...Please see me after service today if you are at all interested in connecting...

Finally, just one more plug...The Samaritan's purse shoeboxes are due November 15th...Please if you have not picked one up please do so...We are specifically targeting boys...If you've already completed shoebox but if you are wondering what to fill it with then we recommend...

Ladies and gentlemen...You may or may not have heard but Last Sunday in Sutherland Springs, TX...tragedy struck the First Baptist church when they 27 people in a tragic church shooting...

Words cannot describe the crippling sorrow on so many families...The loss of a loved one is life altering...

In amongst the reports of this tragedy, my wife pointed out very unique report from a gentlemen named Joe Holcombe...

Joe and Claryce Holcombe lost nine family members during Sunday's horrific mass shooting at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, but, despite the unimaginable carnage, the couple is remaining firm and resolute in their faith.

The extent of the impact that the event had on the Holcombe family is both staggering and unfathomable, as the elderly couple lost their son, Bryan Holcombe, and his wife, Karla, in addition to their grandson, Marc Daniel Holcombe, as well as [his baby daughter](#)—and their great-granddaughter—Noah.

They also lost Crystal Holcombe, the wife of their grandson, John Holcombe, three of their great-grandchildren—Emily, Megan and Greg—and the unborn baby Crystal was carrying, who was reportedly due to be born in April;

But listen to what Joe says in the face of this tremendous tragedy...listen to this man's faith...

“God doesn't want us to understand him; he wants us to trust him and I think I'd tell them that. We don't understand how God works, but we trust everything he does.”

What a statement of faith...We must pray and grieve for the church in Sutherland Springs...But let us also be inspired by this man's faith to trust God in the face of tragedy and uncontrollable

circumstance... **Let us Pray...**

Introduction to Sermon

This morning...I'd like to talk to you about espionage...Specifically, Christian espionage...

Yet Unfortunately, espionage does not just exist in the government or in foreign relations...Espionage actually exists in many churches today...Believe it or not...there are teachers, leaders and prophets that cloak themselves in righteousness or Biblical knowledge but their conscious or unconscious actions shine a different light...

The passage today discusses wolves in sheep's clothing...False prophets, false teachers that infiltrate the church all while pretending to be someone their not...And oftentimes working for the enemy...

One scholar adds, "The greatest danger to the church today is not humanism, paganism, atheism, or agnosticism...The greatest dangers is not increasing hostility against our faith from the culture...Our greatest danger is apostasy on the inside, arising from false teachers...theological liberals who deny and distort Biblical doctrine and lead others down the same path..."

Yet, one question that may be rolling around in your mind is, "Do false prophets really exist in today's church?" According to the scripture and my own personal experience, I believe false prophets exist throughout the modern church...

ME:

I believe false teachers and prophets are in our churches today...Some even perhaps run some churches...

Personally, In my 15 years of ministry I only know of one particular person that was a false teacher...

This person truly was a wolf in sheep's clothing...

However, this particular person was one of the most charismatic people I ever met...His charisma opened doors into ministry and the church that would not typically be open otherwise...

He was a young man at the time...And everything He did in view of other Christians pointed to the fact that He was a devoted passionate follower of Jesus Christ...The way He "worshipped", the way he "prayed", the way he talked to others in front of us leaders was profound...

He had all the appearances of Godliness and all the appearances of legitimacy...

However, his fruit told a different story...Around the leaders of the ministry He was this shining example of Godliness but behind the scenes his actions were totally different...

What the leaders of the ministry did not know or realize was that those who truly knew him found him to be a wolf in sheep's clothing...

In secret, this young man was doubting everything he publicly adhered to...He opposed even the perception of rules and obedience to the scripture...He rejected everything as legalism...Any rule or any command given in scripture was legalism...

In secret...He caused divisions...He caused divisions in friendships...He purposefully targeted women in the church which caused divisions amongst the women and the men...

He purposefully doubted the leadership of other leaders in the church...The venom he spread behind closed doors was over the direction of the church...Once venom is in the blood stream of a church is difficult to rid...

What was the result?

Unfortunately, the people that saw the bad fruit...Those that saw him as a wolf in sheep's clothing...Did not communicate to the leaders above of his destructive nature until the damage was largely done...

By the time the dust settled, people actually left the church...friendship permanently

scarred...And honestly, many of those friendships were never forged...

His full colors eventually came out...Years after the damage was done...He finally came out and admitted to the world what I found out the hard way...

He was Secretly an atheist...He actually became an evangelical atheist...Publicly questioning every ounce of Christianity although he falsely represented it just years before...

Transition: Friends, false teachers and false prophets are out there...People that appear to be Christians can infiltrate our churches pretending to serve El Elyon but secretly serving the Enemy...

But the question really is Not “if they exist...” but rather “How do we distinguish Godly leaders and teachers from false ones...?” The question we are answering in today’s passage is “How do we recognize false teachers?”

Transition: So, please open up your Bibles once again to Matthew 7, Matthew 7 and we will be looking today at verses 15-23...

To set the stage for today’s discussion, Today we are in a section of Matthew that is called the “Sermon on the Mount”...In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is essentially discussing the Christian life...In Matthew 5, Jesus first describes the picture of the Christian life, then in Matthew 6 he describes the principles to live by, and in Matthew 7 He discusses the prohibitions to avoid, and finally the practices to include in your daily walk...So we looked at the picture, principles, prohibitions and practices...

And then, Jesus adds one more “P” to the Sermon on the Mount in Chapter 7:12-29...Jesus in verses 12-29 provides the “Proof” of someone living the Christian walk...

In the verses we looked at two weeks ago...The first two proofs of a growing Christian walk #1: How we treat others...The way we treat others is the test of our spiritual maturity...

The second proof was the path which a person walks...the narrow way to Godliness or the wide way leading to destruction...

Transition: Now, as we step down into today’s passage...As we slowly climb our way in...I want to point of something rather interesting about this entire section of scripture...Verses 13-29 Jesus displays His reputation as the master teacher...Jesus uses ethical dualism...or in others words...in each of his pictures he presents two pictures one that is false and one that is true...

In today’s passage, the dualism Jesus uses to illustrate his point is first sheep and wolves...and second He uses good fruit and bad fruit...Using both to describe and demonstrate the evidence of false teachers...

Transition: So, come with me back to Matthew 7 and we will be stepping into the text at verse 15...

GOD:

Read Matthew 7:15, “¹⁵ “Beware of the false prophets (Literally Greek is pseudo-prophets), who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”

What is he telling his disciples and future Christians to do? What is the command here? **To beware of false teachers...**

Or, in others words...His disciples must **Discern**... His disciples then and us today must **DISCERN** True Followers from False Followers...

Point #1: Discern True Followers from False...

Why is it essential to discern it? Why is it essential as Christian sitting in this sanctuary to discern a true follower and teacher from a false one?

Because a false teacher and false follower WILL lead others astray and may even yourself astray from a true walk with God...

And Oftentimes false prophets come as sheep looking just like everyone else...But inwardly they hide their agendas and false views...

Yet as I look at the scripture and think on my own personal experience, I find there are two different groups of false teachers...

The **two groups** of false teachers are **Those who know they are false teacher** and **those who do not know they are....**

The first group are those that know they are false teachers...Yet due to the compulsion of the enemy...Infiltrate and conduct spiritual espionage... They purposefully infiltrate to lead people astray

They reject the core doctrines of the faith such as the Trinity, the virgin birth, the hypostatic union, the inspiration of scripture and purposefully infiltrate a body of believers to convince them against truth...

Friends, we must discern...We must discern true from false...

Transition: But I believe the second group of false teachers is far more common and dangerous...the second group of false teachers are those that do not know they are false teachers...

Think about it: I believe based on the context of this passage and the contents of the Sermon on the Mount...I believe Jesus in Matthew 7 is specifically pointing out the Pharisees as the False Prophets...Jesus is literally standing in front of the class and calling out the Pharisees for being false prophets...

But let me ask you a question...Did the Pharisees think they were false prophets? NO...They thought they were teaching sound good doctrine...They thought they were obeying the scripture in the way it was intended...They thought they were setting the example of Godliness to all the crowds and Jews that looked up to them...

Yet, The Pharisees here are the false prophets...AND they have NO CLUE...

Relevant: I believe this is all to common...Personally, before I read this passage, I always thought all false prophets were purposefully conniving and purposefully evil... I thought they purposefully infiltrated the church to destroy it with false doctrine...

But based on this passage and now as I think on it...the second group is far more common and much more prevalent...

To tell you a quick story and give you an example: I heard a story recently of this exact thing happening a local church here...

The leader began a Bible study and became convinced of the hyper-grace movement...Being convinced, he began to proclaim its Gospel to the Bible study members...

Preaching that God is only a God of love and grace therefore repentance of sin and faith in the Gospel is not needed...Life change was not a product of faith in the Gospel...That God was so loving THAT faith in Christ was not needed for salvation...

Yet, the leader thought he was Biblically correct...He presented a false gospel as true and eventually led his followers into isolationism and eventually to leave the church all together...

Friends...we must discern false teacher, false prophets, false leaders before its too late...Finding the wolf in sheep's clothing is vital to the furtherance of a disciple's walk and the progression of the Gospel...

Transition: So, there is a question we must still answer...Right? The question we must answer is "How do we discern?" "How do we discern a false prophet from a true one?"

Transition: Well, fortunately for us Jesus answers this very question in verses 16-20...Let us read it together...Look at verses 16-20...

Read verses 16-20- ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷ So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ So then, you will know them by their fruits.

How do we discern false teachers?

Look at verse 16 again... “You will know them by their fruits...” You will know them by their fruits... You can discern false teachers and prophets by what they produce...

If you want to know if someone is a false teacher then look at what they produce... Don't look at their words or charisma... Don't even look at what they do.... **Look at what they produce...**

I mean think about it... How do we know someone is a good ball coach? Not by charisma or even recruiting but by their fruit... By their “Ws”... We tell a good coach by their fruits...

Now there is a really interesting word in verse 16... If you look back at your English text you will see the three English words, “You will know”.. Now, what we can't see is that is really only one word in the original language...

And what's interesting is that this one word is a compound word... Jesus is actually smashing two different words together making one new word... It is “epi” which means “on” and “ginoskow” which means to know intimately... or to know for sure... To really know someone as you know a spouse or hope to know God...

So, Jesus is saying... You will know for sure if they are a “pseudo prophet” **based on their fruit... Also another Greek observation...** It is interesting also that “From their fruit” is in the place of emphasis in the sentence...

So, Jesus is saying this... “You will know for sure **BY THEIR FRUIT...**” Discern their motives and stance **BY THEIR FRUIT...**

Notice with me verse 20 really quick... It has the exact same Greek and English structure and verbiage... So, by placing the phrase in the place of Emphasis and by repeating it verbatim... Jesus is screaming to all Christians world-wide that **YOU CAN DISCERN FALSE TEACHERS BY THEIR FRUIT...**

If you still doubt that false teachers are in today's church then let me share with you a Story from a missionary I heard recently... A number of years ago... this missionary served alongside some elders that were truly false teachers... These false teachers infiltrated their local church and led about half of the congregation to leave...

And two years later their false prophet status was revealed... Several months ago these elders which were false teacher were actually hung and burned by locals for stealing a car.... Yikes... Their real identity came out by their split and later action...

Point #2: Discern True from False by their fruit...

Look back at verse 17, “So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.” A good tree... a good follower of Jesus Christ will produce good fruit and a false follower of Christ will produce bad fruit...

But there is still a question needing to be answered in this section... If we are supposed to discern

a false teacher from a true one based on their fruit, then what is bad fruit and what is good fruit?

Based on the passage, the wolves are the Pharisees...What kind of fruit did the Pharisees produce?

Think about it: What were the bad fruits produced by the Pharisees?

There are four main bad fruits they created:

Bad Fruit #1: Strife- strife...Think about it...They caused strife not just amongst their countrymen, not just amongst government authority, but they mainly caused strife amongst the Lord of all Creation...The creator of the ends of the earth...As Doug said this past week...They caused strife against God who made us and bought us...

They constantly bickered and fought against His free gift of salvation weighing down their followers with rules and shame rather than lifting the weights of guilt and sin through the Gospel...

Transition: Yet their strife was based in something...It was based in their self-righteousness...

Bad Fruit #2: Self-Righteousness- Self-righteousness is defined as “convinced of one’s own righteousness especially in contrast with the actions and beliefs of others: Narrow-minded and moralistic...

The Pharisee’s strife was firmly rooted in their false view of their own superior spirituality due to a performance...

Friends...True-righteousness is not a performance...True righteousness is by the Gospel and through the Gospel...True Righteous was forged and paid on the cross...and True Righteousness is fueled by our appreciation of the cross...

True righteousness is found only through a relationship with Jesus Christ that transforms our inward filth to an inward desire to look like the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords...

Bad Fruit #3: Contrary Teaching: Contrary Teaching...Jesus calls out their contrary teaching most evidently found in the Great commandment...Even in the Sermon on the Mount itself...Jesus says, “You have been told...But I say to you...” The Pharisees constantly taught contrary teaching...

Bad Fruit #4: False Gospel: a False Gospel...The Gospel of the Pharisees was justification based on circumcision and following rules... However, the teaching of the Old Testament is not justification before God based on circumcision or even by following the Law...Justification is by faith alone if you don’t believe me then look at Genesis 15:6 and the Law was meant to point you to Love God and Love Others...

Listen friends, if anyone comes in here and proclaims a different Gospel then I give you full permission to take your hymnal and throw it at them...

Listen, friends, if anyone presents a different Gospel in any other capacity then they are a false teacher...

Transition: So the 4 bad fruits are Strife, Self-Righteousness, Contrary Biblical Teaching, Contrary Gospel...

Transition: But what is good fruit? What is the fruit we should look for in a true disciple of Jesus Christ...

Well, to help us out, a trusty friend named Charles Ryrie is a big help...Before I add Dr. Ryrie's commentary...I'd like to share a personal story about Charles Ryrie...

In the most formative years of my spiritual life, Dr. Charles Ryrie was right there...His books shaped my theology and outlook on the scripture with a dispensational, conservative innerant perspective...

To tell you a quick story..I was in the locker room of the DTS fitness center eavesdropping on two men's conversation which is always bit dangerous...One man said to the other, "Have you ever met Charles Ryrie before?" Of course my ear perked up...And then he said, "Well, this man behind you is Charles Ryrie..." Of course I bull dozed my way in and stooped down to this elderly man and said, "You're Charles Ryrie? It is an honor to meet you..." I shook his hand...shaking the whole time...I didn't wash my hand for a week...

But anyways...Charles Ryrie in his book, So Great a Salvation, provides 5 good fruits...Good Spiritual fruit includes: (1) a Christ-like character- based on Galatians 5:23, (2) a life characterized by good works- Colossians 1:10, (3) a faithful witness- 1 Cor. 16:15, (4) a pair of lips that praise God- Hebrews 13:15, and (5) a generous giving of one's money- Romans 15:28...I would add a sixth- teaching correct doctrine...Teaching Correct doctrine- 2 Timothy 4:2-4...

The good fruit we should look for in people's life is (1) a Christlike character, (2) a life characterized by good works, (3) a faithful witness, (4) a pair of lips that praise God, and (5) a generous giving of one's money. (6) Teaching Correct Doctrine...

Transition: Based on the passage today, the point today:

Point: Discern True from False by their fruit...Discern True from False by their fruit...

Transition: And based on the passage today, I'd like to address four different groups of people...

YOU:

Today, I'd like to address four different groups of people...

Group #1: The first group are those who are false prophets and know it...If you are a false teacher and you know it...then I have a warning for you...My warning to you either repent or

leave... If there are any in this group then either repent and believe in Christ or leave...

Group #2: The second group are those who are false prophets and do not know it...the second group are those who are false prophets and do not know it...

Listen to the warning in verses 21-23...In verses 21-23, I believe Jesus is specifically talking about false prophets who do not know it...including those in here that think they are “Christians” but have never truly believed...Look at verses 21-23

Read verses 21-23, “²¹ “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. ²² Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many ^[n]miracles?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’ ”

Yikes...What is the number of people that are deceived? Look at verse 22... “Many” literally in the original it is “Many upon Many”... Many upon many will say, “ ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’ ””

Hundred of thousands of people perhaps millions upon millions will be deceived...They think they believe but never did...

Yikes...I shared two weeks ago that this is my greatest fear in ministry... That people can think they are saved...But they aren’t...I believe there are hundreds of people that have come in and out of the Depot, in and out of the inner city ministry in Dallas, At Southside and even here that hear the Gospel proclaimed...

Yet they stop from repenting...

To tell you a quick story...I had this young lady in my youth group that heard me one night proclaim the Gospel...She approached me after youth group and she said, “Byron, I was convicted tonight...I am not a Christian...I was told as a child I believed and I was even baptized but I never truly repented...I never truly believed...” Right then and there I told her...

Well...You’ve been in church your whole life...You know how to become a Christian...I did not even lead her in a prayer...I just let her pray right there to receive Christ...

The scripture says to “examine yourself”...Examine yourself right now...

If you are unsure of where you will go when you pass away...Then why wait...Repent and believe in Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior... (pause)

Transition: If you are unsure then believe...Why wait? Yet, there are two more groups also I’d like to address...

Group #3: Those who are about to go on a witch hunt...If you are seeking to relive the Salem Witch Trials...To Anyone who is taking the fruit list and measuring every leader up here in Calvary to see if they are a false teacher... Let me call a “Timeout”

...Yes, let us be leery of falsehood but also let us not stir up strife...If there are concerns over another in the church, then practice Matthew 18...Let us be patient and love each other...Rather than stir up strife practice Matthew 18 and Love them to repentance...

Group #4: To those who are seeking to practically apply this passage to their life...If you want to apply this passage to your life then let me ask you a few questions...

What do you bear? What are the ministry results around you? Is it strife or unity? Is it generational discipleship or generational delusion?

Applying this Scripture comes down to two key words... **Beware and Bear...**

#1: Beware: Discern good from bad- I encourage you to take the comparison of good fruit and bad fruit...Use the four bad fruits and the 6 good fruits as a test to any Christian leader you meet...Honestly, put me up against it...Put any church leader against this standard...

I am not perfect, believe it or not, but any church leader should produce these 6 fruits... The good fruit of (1) a Christlike character, (2) a life characterized by good works, (3) a faithful witness, (4) a pair of lips that praise God, and (5) a generous giving of one's money. (6) Teaching Correct Doctrine...

#2: Bear: Be Equipped For Good- I encourage you if you want to bear more and more fruit then you come talk to me after the service today...I encourage you to shoot me an email to discuss how to be equipped to bear good fruit...

Also, Strive to use the 4 bad fruits and 6 good fruits as a target...As a goal...That everyday we strive to leave good fruits behind wherever we go...To leave behind good fruits in the grocery store or the retirement home in which we live...

What fruit will leave behind? Fruits of the Spirit? Fruits of Righteousness? Fruits of the Gospel? Fruits of unity and love? Or Fruits of Strife? Fruits of Self-Righteousness? Fruits contrary to the Scripture?

What will people say about you when you are gone? Will they wish to plant the seeds of your life into others or wish some seeds were never made?

WE:

As I close let us reflect up this great quote from a great person of faith...

”

and we will begin our discuss in verse 15...

WE:

But how do we differenti

GOD: