

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

FAMILY DEVOS



Ripe or Rotten

Scripture: Matthew 7:15-23

Memory Verse: Matthew 7:20

“Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”

For My Family:

Jesus has already taught His followers that we should be careful not judge others if we have sin in our own hearts that needs to be dealt with first, but He does instruct us to have wisdom and be discerning based on the things people say and do. In other words, it's not always wrong to make judgements about people. It's actually safe and wise for us to do so! Jesus explains this in a warning and illustration.

“Beware of false prophets.” This means beware of false teachers, whom Jesus describes as wolves in sheep's clothing: people who claim to serve God, but are actually just trying to serve themselves. Throughout the Bible, God's people are often described as sheep, and God is described as our Shepherd. Those who want to harm God's people are described as wolves. They may dress up as sheep so no one suspects them, but all of us know that if there really was a wolf wearing sheepskin, it wouldn't be hard to identify if we took the time to take a closer look (sheep certainly don't have claws or sharp teeth!) That is Jesus' encouragement: to take a closer look. We can know and recognize people who actually are trying to turn us away from God or harm us by their fruits.

But what does this mean? What does fruit have to do with anything? I thought we were talking about wolves and sheep! Jesus says everyone is a tree, and there are only two types: good and bad. Bad trees produce bad fruit, and good trees produce good fruit. If someone says they are a follower of Jesus and they love others, are patient, are kind, have self-control, etc., those are all good fruits (fruits of the Spirit—Galatians 5)! The things they do and say show me who they are on the inside. Good fruit comes from a good tree. But if someone told me they loved God, but made fun of Christians, or constantly bullied people, or were mean all the time, then I would know they are not who they say they are. That person's life is full of bad fruit, so they must be a bad tree.

One day, every tree that bears bad fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. Jesus further teaches this point by giving the example that not everyone who calls Him Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven. Sadly, there are those who claim to serve Jesus, but their hearts are far from God. They say they love God, but they don't care to do the things He commands them. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” Thankfully, even though all of us once had bad hearts full of bad fruit, Jesus made a way for us to have our hearts transformed. He gives us His Holy Spirit who produces good fruit in our lives. And the gift of a clean heart and His Holy Spirit is made available to all who believe in Him.

Questions for Young Children:

How does Jesus describe false teachers?

What is the difference between bad fruit and good fruit?

How can our lives produce good fruit?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Can you think of any examples of false teaching/false teachers and how they might be harmful?

Jesus tells us we will know them by their fruits, but how do we know what is good fruit and what is bad fruit?

Does your life produce “good fruit” or “bad fruit”? How does your life show or not show that Jesus is Lord?