

## Sermon Series: Spurred on to Holiness (and Power) by Immersing Ourselves into the Life of Christ Through the Eyes of the Apostles – A Harmony of All Four Gospels

Sermon Title: “How to Spot a Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing”.

June 2, 2019

Today’s Scripture: “But beware of false spokesmen for God, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are plundering wolves. You will know them by their fruits. <sup>3</sup> For each tree is recognized by its own fruit. <sup>1</sup> Do men gather grapes from brambles, or figs from thistles?

“Thus every good tree brings forth good fruit, but a diseased tree brings forth evil fruit. <sup>3</sup> For <sup>1</sup> a good tree cannot produce evil fruit, nor a diseased tree produce good fruit. Every tree not producing good fruit is hewn down and thrown into the fire.

<sup>3</sup> “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good, and the evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth what is evil; for out of the fullness of his heart his mouth speaks. <sup>1</sup> Indeed then by their fruits will you discern them.

Theme verse: Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. (ESV)

Introduction: Nothing should matter more in life to a parent than to give their children the truth about heaven and hell from God’s word so that both mom and dad and son and daughter choose the correct path that leads to eternal life. Jesus wants us to know what that truth is.

Main point: If the way is narrow and the path is hard that leads to life (according to Jesus), it is a dangerous thing to listen to false prophets who switch the two and deceive many to believe they are on the right road to heaven when in reality they are not.

Is the way hard? Testimony from Christians in a Muslim country in last week’s insert. . .

Context:

Exegesis

1. False prophets are extremely dangerous. Jesus speaks of them as wolves. Actually they are like coyotes (human smugglers) run by the cartels. They will promise the world but steal you blind.
  - Jeremiah 6:13–14 “For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace. (ESV)

- Ezekiel 22:27 Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain. (ESV)
  - Shepherds in Jesus' day would wear sheepskins for clothes with the wool on the inside and the hide facing out.
  - Prophets wore similar clothes and pretend prophets would wear the sheepskins to pretend to be prophets. Zechariah 13:4–5 “On that day every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies. He will not put on a hairy cloak in order to deceive, but he will say, ‘I am no prophet, I am a worker of the soil, for a man sold me in my youth.’ (ESV)
  - Two dangers of false prophets:
    1. **They will lead people to hell.** The danger of false prophets/teachers today is the false gospels they preach that doesn't offend anybody. Everyone likes to hear that God wants you to be happy, wealthy, successful, and healthy, so just pay that preacher his asking price and believe what he says. Or they will preach that no one needs to leave their life of sinful behavior in order to accept Christ. You can have your affairs, you can keep abusing your spouse, you can lie about your work associates and still call yourself a Christian. You can get drunk every other weekend or every weekend and spend your children's inheritance on foolish items and it doesn't matter to God. Yes it does. Of course the real danger is that no one is truly saved and all their followers will end up in eternal damnation.
    2. **They will steal you blind.** In NT days prophets were a real encouragement to the church. They left everything to go from city to city preaching the gospel and bring encouragement to persecuted believers. But the church had guidelines. Here they are:
      - If a prophet remains longer than three days in one home he is a false prophet. If he asks for money he is a false prophet. If a prophet does not ask for money for himself but encourages giving to the poor he is a true prophet of God. So, Jesus says. . .
2. You can spot them by their fruit. *You will know them by their fruits. 3 For each tree is recognized by its own fruit. 1 Do men gather grapes from brambles, or figs from thistles?*
- Exactly what is that fruit? It is the fruit of the Spirit. *Galatians 5:22-24 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (ESV)*
  - The fruit of a false prophet is found in *Galatians 5:19–21 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before,*

*that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (ESV)*

- IN those days there was a weed or bush called a buck thorn that produced berries that looked like grapes. They were not grapes. There was also a thistle plant that produced a flower that looked like figs. They were not figs. Jesus' point is that false prophets can look like the real thing but what they are offering you is nothing less than garbage. You aren't nourished on poisonous berries and you can't feed your stomach on flowers.
  - So, look at what they are offering to you as food. Will what they teach you produce in you strength to endure hard times and suffering as a Christian like the believers we spoke of earlier? If not they are feeding you poison that tastes like sugar.
3. You can spot them by what they **love**. Do they love the sheep more than their lives? Or do they love their own lives at the expense of the sheep? *John 10:11–12 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. (ESV)*
- What does a false prophet/shepherd love?
    1. **Money.** NT rabbis were to teach the word but they were not allowed to accept payment for their services and were to have a job to provide for his needs. The early church changed that to provide a living for their elders and shepherds but that living was not designed to make them rich. Matt sent me a link to an article in the daily Caller of an interview with Ken Copeland who got angry when he was questioned why he needed 3 jets and why he felt it was O.K. to amass a 760 million dollar fortune. He defended the jets by saying "the demonic environment in commercial flights are not good for a preacher!" ??? He compared it to flying in a long tube with a bunch of demons.
      - ✓ No preacher can live on nothing and if a pastor is always wondering how he can make it without starving, he cannot be productive, but his greatest joy is not his paycheck, but the absolute joy of sharing the glorious truths in Scripture to men and women and their children.
    2. **Prestige.** A false prophet wants acclaim and notoriety. He wants to be published and his books to be the stimulus for conference speaking and he wants a following or fan club at those conferences. Two men were talking one day about a particularly humble shepherd and the man who did not know him well but knew of him said, "When he gets to heaven he will get a front row seat" and the man who knew him well said "He would be miserable in a front seat anywhere."
    3. **Originality.** False prophets like being unique and edgy. There are several today who like Rob Bell want to say there is no hell and no need to worry about one if there was because it is only temporary. The church has never believed that. But some like to be hip and promote cutting edge lies the Bible never taught.

4. You can spot them by their **teaching**.
  - Is their gospel a gospel of **prohibition**? No drinking, smoking, dancing, movies, vacations, or casual dress at church? My seat buddy on trip to D.C. “You’re a Baptist minister? Then you can’t drink any alcohol or go to movies or dance with your wife”
  - Or is their gospel a gospel of **permission**? Anything goes, no sin is too big to matter to God. A Joel Osteen gospel.
  - Or is their gospel a **Lawless** gospel? No need to repent of anything, just slide into the Kingdom with a quick recitation of a creed, any creed will do.
  
5. You can spot them by their **consistency**. <sup>3</sup> *“The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good, and the evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth what is evil; for out of the fullness of his heart his mouth speaks. <sup>1</sup> Indeed then by their fruits will you discern them.*
  - Jesus says that it is impossible for a false teacher to genuinely go against his nature and do what only a true prophet does. He will hate his enemy, lust after illicit relationships, continually be unforgiving, he will be greedy, and you will see it come out. It is there and nothing he can do will be able to hide it from his listeners. Just like a bad tree will produce diseased fruit so will a false teachers show his true colors, and,
  - It is impossible for a true prophet or shepherd to be anything but loving to others, even his enemies, forgiving, unselfish, and pure. That is his nature and it will come out. You should be able to see it in his life very clearly according to Jesus. Pastors who have had affairs? Were they ever really genuine shepherds?

Application:

The true gospel