

Fake News

Matthew 7:15-20

With everything going on in America today, MUCH is driven by the media. Those of more conservative views quickly call out CNN, MSNBC, NPR and others and label them as ‘fake news’ outlets. Those on the more liberal spectrum do the same thing. They call “FOX NEWS” ‘faux news’ and slam Glen Beck on “Blaze TV” and vilify Rush Limbaugh as sycophants of the far-right news media and their talking points. The left calls the right fake, and the right calls the left fake. “Fake News” is one of the more popular catch phrases of today.

Fakeness is not new just as we have seen in our Scripture passage this morning. Fakeness is, and has been, rampant in society for thousands of years. There is counterfeit money, counterfeit diamonds, counterfeit shoes, and the list could go on and on. In the everyday world we say that a pretty car may look fast when it isn’t. It may be ‘all show and no go’ and a counterfeit Cowboy is described as “all hat and no cattle”. There are counterfeit Christians too. Just as we see them today, Jesus saw them in His day. They were destructive then; they ARE destructive now. He said, “Beware”. As we dive into this passage this morning, I want us to reflect on the verses that we covered a couple of weeks ago about judging. In these 6 verses, Jesus is telling us to turn loose the reins on judging what you see/here/experience on the unfruitful and counterfeit ‘Christian’. One such prophet in the Old Testament was a man named Zedekiah in 1 Kings 22. Ahab was a wicked king of Israel, and he was about to go into battle with Syria and King Jehoshaphat of Judah was going to help. They sought the counsel of the prophets, and Zedekiah made iron horns and told Ahab that with those horns Israel would push Syria back to their own country. Jehoshaphat said, “Let’s get a second opinion” and another prophet named Micaiah said, “I see Israel scattered like sheep without a shepherd.” Zedekiah spoke through a false spirit, and Jesus was warning the Galileans to beware of those types of ‘prophets’ who look great on the outside while they are filled with dead men’s bones within (Matthew 23:27).

I. BEWARE

Vs. 15

(a) **Imposters**: The term ‘false prophet’ literally means ‘imposter’ or ‘pretended foreteller’ and Jesus validates the existence of such spurious religionists. But He really cranks up the heat when He says, “Beware” and this is why.

1. Notice their approach, “which come to you”. Jesus uses the comparison of sheep and wolves, and naturally, sheep don’t openly approach wolves because the wolf is the natural predator of the sheep. The wolf isn’t there to help but to destroy.

a. Listen to me. False “Christians” aren’t there to help. Paul warned us about those who entered the Church that would cause division. As they ‘come to you’ they also bring...

- A Fake Love. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 16:22 that if any man says that he loves the Lord when he doesn’t, let him be Anathema.
- A Fake Gospel. Paul also wrote to the Galatians that if any man or angel preached another ‘gospel’ other than what he had preached, let them be cursed (Galatians 1:8-9). John’s 3rd letter focuses on a man named Diotrephes whose words and actions were malicious and exclusive. Doctrine vs. Dogma.
- A Fake Storyline. Turn with me to Acts 20:28-35. Pay particular attention to what he said in verse 35, “*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*” The wolf is not there to GIVE to the flock but to take from it. BEWARE! It isn’t what they are on the OUTSIDE, but it is everything about what they are ‘inwardly’!

Matthew 15:19-20a *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: ²⁰ These are the things which defile a man...*

II. BE OBSERVANT

Vss. 16-18

(a) **Recognition:** “*You’ll know them.*” In the world of police work and crime solving, that is called making a ‘*positive identification.*’ The word ‘*know*’ means “to recognize; to become fully acquainted with”. Then Jesus, on a dime, tells you that you’ll recognize them by their fruit. Vs. 16

1. I love just good, old common sense. Jesus asks a good common sense question, “Do you get grapes or figs from a briar bush?” NOPE!

Illustration: In 1 Samuel 24, David and his men are fleeing from King Saul and they hide in a cave. Saul enters the cave to take a nap and David cuts off a piece of Saul's robe to let him know that, had he chosen to, he could have easily killed the king. Listen to what David said in verse 13, "*As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.*" In short, David declares that his 'fruit' is good by his own decision. David's men said, "The Lord has delivered Saul, your enemy, into your hands. Now kill him and let's go home with the win." David said, "Nope. The Lord made Saul king and it's not my place to reverse God's decision. I'm going to do what's right."

(b) **Resolve**: That works as a segway into verses 17-18 where Jesus just speaks plainly to the masses, "Good trees put off good fruit and bad trees put off bad fruit. Good trees don't yield bad fruit and bad trees don't yield good." **This isn't deeds alone but also doctrine.** Vss. 17-18

Illustration: Think back to the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3. Both Adam and Eve have eaten of the fruit of the tree of good and evil and they are being held accountable for their actions by the LORD. Think about what Jesus just said. Remember what they said. Adam said, "My fruit is bad because of Eve's tree." Eve said, "My fruit is bad because of the serpent's tree." It was each of their own decision to rebel against God! How many people today blame their bad actions because of someone else's tree? Jesus said, "That's not how it works bubba!" You didn't cheat on your wife because she's bad, but because you're bad! You didn't steal from your employer because he/she is bad, but because you're bad! In today's climate of demanding apologies for the sins of our ancestors, I cannot repent for the sins of my 4th great-grandfather who owned slaves. I cannot assume his accountability in absentia, and you cannot assign it. That's preposterous! **That's not doctrine...that's dogma and thus the false teachings of men!** Had I had that kind of power, I would have gotten saved for my brother Sam before he died, but I don't have that power or privilege. If I believe that the Bible is true, and I do, then my 4th Great-grandfather stood before the Lord and answered for the fruit that came from his own tree on June 5, 1835. Paul wrote that "*It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment.*" He stood before the Lord and the account was settled that day! To doubt that is to doubt the integrity of the Lord.

1. Therefore, both you and I alike MUST resolve that our fruit will be better than that. I resolve if my fruit is good and the tree that it comes from is good...that's on me and me alone through my relationship with Jesus Christ. The same goes for you. That's biblical. That's doctrinal. That's what Jesus said. We as believers are Christians first, and

everything else comes farther down the road, and that includes nationality, ethnicity, or genetics. In Scotland, the saying goes that we Campbells are born murderers. Here is my question, “If that is so, then why do you want to tick me off?” My fruit has nothing to do with my genetics. When I got saved, I received from the Holy Ghost a new Spirit (genetics) within me that would allow my fruit to be good IF that is my ultimate resolution.

- Love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance and against such there is no condemnation

III. BE SURE

Vss. 19-20

(a) **Walk Around**: In the US Navy, it is the fighter pilot’s responsibility to do a ‘walk-around’ inspection of his/her Falcon aircraft before takeoff. It doesn’t matter who the Aviation Ordnaceman was that armed the aircraft with Sparrow or Sidewinder missiles, or who the Gunners Mate was that loaded the M61A1 6-barrel 20 mm cannon. It is HIS/HER responsibility to do the ‘walk around’ of their own aircraft before takeoff from the flight deck to ensure proper operation so their mission can be successfully completed. They know what to look for. They know what they’re looking at. Their aircraft...their job.

1. Jesus said, “Your tree...your job.” Do your ‘walk around’. I hate to quote Tom Brady, but “Do your job.”

2 Peter 1:10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.

2. If you don’t inspect your tree to ensure that your salvation in Jesus Christ is ‘sure’ (sound, solid, true and on a firm foundation), then know what awaits you in the future. Your tree will be cut down and cast into fire. Jesus said, “You’ll know them.” Jesus said in John 10:27, “*My sheep hear my voice, and **I know them**, and they follow me*”.