



# Beware False Prophets & Their Fruit

Considering a Message from Matthew 7:15-23

For the Week of July 22nd, 2018

*This Sunday of the church year is dedicated to being always prepared to face false teachers and their false teachings. These false teachings can result in people being led astray from the true faith. For this reason Jesus bluntly states: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matt 7:15-23). Lies and deceit come masquerading as the truth. False prophets speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the Lord (Jer 23:16-29). They deny the judgment of the Lord, speaking peace to the unrepentant, when in truth there is condemnation and wrath—such a message is not helpful but harmful for us! Jesus teaches us to identify these false teachers: "You will know them by their fruits." The "fruits" of a true prophet are not outward righteousness or success or even the ability to perform miracles, but faithfulness in proclaiming the Word of the Lord. This is the will of the Father in heaven, that pastors take heed to the flock, the Father's adopted ones (Rom 8:12-17), warning them against the wolves and their lies, and shepherding the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For indeed, the cross is that good tree bearing good fruit, namely the body and blood of Christ, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This proclamation of the Cross and of Christ Crucified for us is what comes to us when Word and Sacrament are shared in their truth and purity.*

**Opening Prayer:** We thank You Heavenly Father for bringing us together. Send Your Holy Spirit to help us grow in faith and love, especially as we gather together with our fellow Christians. Help us to know the truth of your Word—keep us strong in it. Give us the ability to avoid false prophets and their harmful fruit. Helps us to always rejoice in receiving your Word and Sacraments in their truth and purity. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

## CONNECT to Each Other

*Take a few moments to greet each other—especially anyone who might be new or unfamiliar to the people in your group. Introduce yourselves again if anyone is unfamiliar with anyone else, give an interesting factoid about yourself that not many people know...*

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you were conned or fooled by someone who claimed to be someone they were not? —i.e. someone in disguise. Please share your experience (—perhaps this event was funny, happy, serious, or even sad and tragic)... When/How did you realize that you were fooled? How did you react? **ANSWERS WILL VARY/SUBJECTIVE—SOMETIMES YOU REALIZE RIGHT AWAY, SOMETIMES IT TAKES A LONG TIME. IT CAN BE FUNNY, OR A PRANK... BUT WHEN DUPED OR CONNED OUT OF MONEY OR SOMETHING ELSE, IT CAN BE FRUSTRATING—EVEN INFURIATING... NO ONE LIKES TO BE MADE A FOOL—ESPECIALLY WHEN WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO KNOW BETTER!**

## CONNECT to the Word—Read the Bible text together (also consider its context): **Matthew 7:15-23**

2. This blunt warning from Jesus about false prophets is a recurring theme throughout the Bible. Can you think of other sections or verses that also speak to this? Did you catch any other Biblical references to this theme in the Sermon message? **MANY ANSWERS—PERHAPS LOOKING UP REFERENCES IN THE CONCORDANCE OF YOUR BIBLE OR LOOK AT THE FOOTNOTES/ STUDY SECTIONS FOR OTHER CONNECTING VERSES... SOME EXAMPLES INCLUDE: MATTHEW 24:4-5, 11 & 24; 1 JOHN 4:1-6; 2 PETER 2:1-3; 2 CORINTHIANS 11:13-15; ROMANS 16:17-18; DEUTERONOMY 18:20; MARK 7:6-9; JEREMIAH 14:14; GALATIANS 1:6-9; JOHN 14:6; JUDE 1:4; EPHESIANS 5:6; AND MANY OTHERS! FROM THIS SERMON: JOHN 8:31; JUDE 1:3; JEREMIAH 23:16; 2 TIMOTHY 4:3-4; ACTS 17:11; 1 JOHN 4:1... THE POINT: WE SHOULD TAKE THIS SERIOUSLY! GOD TAKES THIS SERIOUSLY!!**
3. Why do you think people in our day and age are hesitant to point out "false prophets"? What are the dangers involved with NOT identifying them or being wary of them? **ANSWERS WILL VARY/ SUBJECTIVE—ECUMENICAL AGE/EVERYONE HAS THEIR OWN TRUTH/MINNESOTA NICE?! DANGER IS THAT THEIR FALSE TEACHINGS START CREEPING INTO OUR HEARTS AND MINDS AND START ERODING THE FOUNDATION OF GOD'S TRUTH—AND WILL LEAD ASTRAY... SLIPPERY SLOPE!!!**



4. When Jesus was on trial before Pilate, Pilate sarcastically asked: “What is truth?!” He apparently had the same dilemma that many today have—they are not sure how to determine what is true or not. Christians do not have this issue. What is our “measuring stick”—our “standard” or “test” of measuring what is true or not? How often should we be using this tool? —How well should we get to know it? **WE HAVE GOD’S WORD—THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT! SEE EPHESIANS 6:17 OR HEBREWS 4:12! WE KNOW WHAT IS TRUE AND FALSE BECAUSE GOD HAS ALREADY GIVEN HIS WORD—WE COMPARE WHAT WE HEAR TO WHAT WE HAVE IN THE BIBLE! THIS MEANS WE SHOULD ALWAYS BE IN GOD’S WORD—STUDYING AND KNOWING IT! WE WANT OUR “HERESY RADAR SYSTEM” TO BE SHARP BY COMPARING ANY TEACHINGS TO WHAT GOD’S WORD SAYS... IF WE HAVE A QUESTION—WE GO TO THE CLEAR WORD OF GOD!!!**
5. In verse 21, Jesus says that those who enter the kingdom of heaven are those who “**do the will of my Father in heaven.**” What does this mean? What is the “will” of God the Father? **GOD’S WILL IS THAT WE BELIEVE IN HIS SON AND THAT WE RECEIVE HIS FREE SALVATION AND FORGIVENESS! THIS HAPPENS AS GOD’S WORD IS SHARED WITH US—AS WE REMAIN STEADFAST IN IT! SEE CATECHISM SECTION ON 3RD PETITION OF LORD’S PRAYER... GOD’S WILL IS THAT WE BE SAVED!!! —A POSITIVE JUDGMENT DAY EXPERIENCE!**

## CONNECT to Life

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6. False Prophets are those who arise within the church, who claim to come in the name of God; yet, they are not sticking to the clear Word of God. Have you run into anyone that fits this description? Where? **ANSWERS WILL VARY/SUBJECTIVE—POSSIBLE ANSWERS WERE SHARED IN SERMON—PREACHERS ON TV/RADIO, EVEN SONGS ON CHRISTIAN RADIO MIGHT CONTAIN FALSE TEACHINGS (I.E. HOW WE HAVE TO “CHOOSE GOD”/DECISION THEOLOGY, ETC.)—CHRISTIAN FILMS THAT ARE NOT THEOLOGICALLY, BIBLICALLY ACCURATE (I.E. SOME MIGHT DENY INFANT BAPTISM, ETC.). ALSO “CHRISTIAN COLLEGES” THAT DON’T ACTUALLY HOLD TO GOD’S WORD.... EXTRA DISCUSSION: WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU HEAR SOMETHING THAT YOUR OWN PASTOR SAYS THAT DOESN’T FIT WITH THE CLEAR TEACHINGS OF GOD’S WORD? —GO AND TALK WITH THEM—IT NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED! SEE MATTHEW 18:15-20 FOR PROPER STEPS TO ADDRESS AN ERRING BROTHER...**
7. In the Sermon message we heard: “We should watch out and beware of the false prophets, but we need not be worried.” Where do we find confidence and peace even though we know that disguised wolves are out there? Why shouldn’t we be worried? **GOD’S WORD—WHICH DOES NOT CHANGE, PROCLAIMS TO US THAT WE ARE FORGIVEN THROUGH JESUS CHRIST’S WORK. WHAT COMFORT WE HAVE IN THIS—WHAT CERTAINTY WE HAVE IN THE FACT THAT JESUS DOES IT FOR US, IT DOESN’T RELY ON US AT ALL! IF WE STICK TO THE CLEAR TEACHINGS OF GOD’S WORD, WE HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT! HE HAS GIVEN US THE ABILITY TO JUDGE IF ONE IS A FALSE PROPHET OR NOT...**
8. How did the hymns, other lessons, parts of the service, etc. fit together with the Sermon message and overall theme for the day? **VARIOUS ANSWERS—OBVIOUSLY THE WHOLE SERVICE IS DESIGNED TO BE A COHESIVE UNIT/SINGLE THEME.**

## CONNECT in Prayer—*In closing & throughout the week!*

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- PLEASE OFFER PRAYERS that God continues to guide us in all truth. Pray that we might recognize and avoid false prophets and their harmful teachings. Pray that God might break and hinder their false teachings and that those subjected to the false teachings might still possess a saving faith in Jesus Christ.
- Prayers for Dr. Steve Reagles after having surgery—that he might have a full recovery. Continued prayers for Gail Blilie, Ernie Lillo, and Dennis Davis who have been in poor health lately.
- Pray for the continued success of our outreach efforts—especially our parade floats and the advertising we are doing through that.
- Prayers for God’s guidance and blessings on our building project—and for our special voter’s meeting next Sunday.
- Offer any other prayers for those in your group who have any requests.

