



# 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?

## 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?



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?
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?
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?

## 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?
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?
8. How did the hymns, other lessons, parts of the service, etc. fit together with the Sermon message and overall theme for the day?

## 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.

