

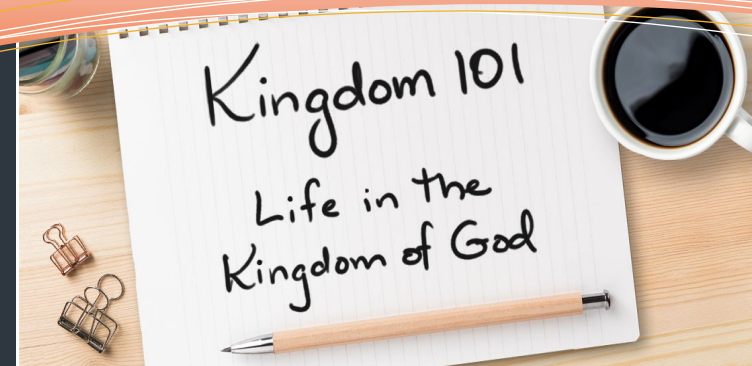
Sermon Study

August 25th, 2019

Bear Good Fruit
Mathew 7:15-20

vision

Eastview
Christian
Church is a
fearless church
of Christ
followers whose
ridiculous love
and dangerous
witness are
irresistible.



AUTHOR'S NOTES (summary of key points for this study)

Remember that chapters and topical headings weren't part of the original biblical writings. As you read the Sermon on the Mount, it's tempting to treat Matthew 7:13-27 as four unconnected sayings of Jesus. But the context of this warning against "false prophets" is an important step in the point Jesus wants to make as His sermon concludes. And if we're supposed to know false prophets by their fruits, then being able to properly identify fruit is critically important.

Gather (your group getting to know each other)

How can you tell if a real piece of fruit is good or bad? Have you ever accidentally eaten something that was spoiled?

Go

(your group on mission)

Back to our earlier point about taking this passage in context, just before it, Jesus talks about entering through the narrow gate (Mt. 7:13), and just after, he says that not everyone who cries out to him will enter the kingdom of Heaven (Mt. 7:21). It may be interesting to note that these are two of the more common “false prophecies” of our modern times: those who say that there are “many ways” to God, and also those who say that “everyone” gets into Heaven. Remember Matthew 7 as a resource when you encounter these beliefs in the world.

Grow (your group growing as Christ-followers)

Key Scripture: “You will recognize them by their fruits.” (Matthew 7:20, ESV)

Discussion

1. Have someone begin the discussion time by leading the group in prayer, then read Matthew 7:15-20 aloud.
2. First thing to notice is that Jesus assumes the presence of false prophets. He treats them as a given, not as a possibility but as a fact. Practically then, this means we should assume there are false prophets trying to influence us. Why do you think this is? Why is it inevitable that people will come along spreading false teachings and false ideas about God?
3. Next, and more importantly, Jesus is clear that these people will not be obviously visible. They will look, sound, and act like one of the sheep. Practically then, this means we should assume the false prophets in our orbit are likely people who look, sound, and act like we think “good Christians” are supposed to. Why do you think this is the case? Why will false prophets blend in and act like one of the flock?
4. Lest these teachings make us paranoid and think everyone around us is a heretic, Jesus gives guidance on how we can identify these false prophets, and it's not about what they say, sing, or write. Jesus says it's about their fruit. What does that mean? When Jesus says we'll recognize them by their fruits, what does he mean we should be looking for? And why is that more important than what that person may say or sing from a stage?

5. Is bad fruit obviously noticeable? Is good fruit easily noticeable? ? In verses 16-18, does Jesus make it sound like telling the healthy from the diseased should be obvious and easy? Is it, in your experience?

6. If identifying false prophets in our midst is all about their fruit, then accurately identifying good fruit from bad fruit in our modern culture is of the utmost importance. How can we be confident we're doing that correctly? Read Galatians 5:23-23 and Ephesians 5:6-10. Do those verses provide any additional guidance?

7. Let's consider an example: “Church A” rarely preaches from the Scripture, and actually adds dangerous New Age ideas into their teachings. But they also have an amazing, nationally-known worship team whose songs praise God and perhaps inspire millions to consider Jesus, while locally, their community groups are actively engaged in helping the poor. Meanwhile, “Church B” opens the Word of God every week and preaches the Gospel while devoutly singing beautiful old hymns. But it gives very little, has almost no impact on its community, and is full of judgmental attitudes toward certain kinds of sinners. How would churches like these fit into our passage? In other words, if there seems to be abundant fruit, does wrong doctrine matter? Or if there's very little fruit at all, does right doctrine matter?

8. Close by reading John 15:1-5 and discussing how it relates.

Give

(your group serving each other)

Serve your group this week by conducting a 'Christian consumption audit.' What are the members of your group reading, watching, and listening to? Which authors, popular pastors, worship songs, podcasts and YouTube channels are they consuming that are shaping their views on Christianity? Is there fruit there?