

## Second Sunday after Pentecost

June 18, 2017

**Matthew 7:15-19 (EHV)** – <sup>15</sup>“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup>By their fruit you will recognize them. You do not gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles, do you? <sup>17</sup>So then, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. <sup>18</sup>A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot produce good fruit. <sup>19</sup>Every tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup>So then, by their fruit you will recognize them. <sup>21</sup>Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup>Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and drive out demons in your name and perform many miracles in your name?’ <sup>23</sup>Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers.’ <sup>24</sup>“Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on bedrock. <sup>25</sup>The rain came down, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house. But it did not fall, because it was founded on bedrock. <sup>26</sup>Everyone who hears these words of mine but does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup>The rain came down, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—it was completely destroyed.” <sup>28</sup>When Jesus finished speaking these words, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, <sup>29</sup>because he taught them as one who had authority, and not like their experts in the law.

### Introduction

Did you notice the change last Sunday? I’m not talking about anything in regard to the weather. I’m not thinking of the color of the paraments – from red to white – although that’s semi-related.

The change I’m talking about is the switch into the non-festival half of the church year. For the next 5+ months – from last week’s Trinity Sunday until Advent begins in December – we’ll be focusing more on the growth of the Holy Spirit’s Church and how it presents itself to the world. From Advent to Pentecost we focus on *Christ for us*. Now our focus changes to *Christ in us*. Of course, you can’t have one without the other.

### Theme: Practice What He Preached.

During these coming months, we’ll study the relationship between our salvation, our faith, and our works. Our Savior doesn’t want us to just have a head-knowledge of the plan of salvation. He also wants us to align our lives accordingly. As James said, **“faith without deeds is dead.”** As the world says, “actions speak louder than words.” If you’re going to talk the talk, then you’ve got to walk the walk. Practice what you preach. Or better yet, let’s study this morning’s gospel lesson under the theme: **PRACTICE WHAT HE PREACHED. Be firm in your foundation. And be consistent in your fruit.**

### Part I: Be firm in your foundation.

Our text is the very end of what’s commonly known as the “Sermon on the Mount.” It’s really more of a Bible study on the mount. Jesus had taught on a wide variety of topics, but from **“blessed are the poor in spirit”** in chapter five to **“it fell with a great crash”** in chapter seven, there’s a common theme. The whole thing is actually a message of **law**. Jesus uses these lessons to show people – you and me included – how far we fall from God’s righteous demands. Jesus preaches us right into the gates of hell when we view the law from the standpoint of “sinner.”

But, like I said before, we can't just forget about what we've heard during the past six months. Jesus came to earth, fulfilled God's righteous demands, died for our sins and rescued us from the gates of hell. He gave us a new status – that of "saints."

The law now has a new function, unique to believers. It serves as our guideline in living a life of thankfulness to our Savior. And in his grace, God even blesses our lives of sanctification, our walk in faith. **"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man..."**

The first part of practicing what Jesus preached means building on a solid foundation. Jesus describes the difference between two house builders. One man digs down to bedrock before laying the first row of bricks. This is the person who hears what Jesus says and uses his Word as a guideline to thankful living. The other man just starts building on the sandy topsoil. This is the person who heard Jesus words, but doesn't practice what Jesus preached. He ignores it, or minimizes it, or changes it all around to fit his own circumstances. His house is an accident waiting to happen.

One thing is similar. The storms of life – the rain, the winds, the flash-floods – don't play favorites. They fall equally upon both types of structures. When the big one hits, it'll be evident who built to last. The house with its foundation resting on sand will topple in on itself and its owner. No safe haven will be found within its walls. But the house that rests on bedrock won't be shaken and therefore it won't fall.

The application of Jesus' parable is pretty obvious. The houses are our earthly lives. Most of the time, they appear equally sound. Most of the time, it doesn't seem to matter what's underneath the outer shell. But in the ultimate storm of God's judgment, one will survive and the other will suffer complete ruin.

The one who builds his life on bedrock is the one who's identified in verse 21 as **"the one who does the will of my Father in heaven."** But that's kinda scary isn't it? What is the "will of God" that we're supposed to do? Is it everything Jesus just laid out in the Sermon on the Mount? We've all failed to do God's will all too many times in our lives! No – some people in our text claim that they've fulfilled the requirements of the law, but Jesus says, **"Depart from me, you evildoers!"**

So, if not that, then what's the Father's will? We need to look elsewhere – in John 6, for example. **"My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."** The short version is that God wants us to believe in his Son for eternal life. And that takes it completely out of our own hands. God won our salvation. God gave us our faith. God's Spirit works in us and keeps us strongly rooted on the bedrock of Jesus' completed work. With him as our foundation, we withstand the test of time and the storms of judgment.

## **Transition**

Now let's look at the other end of our structure. We've looked at the base – the foundation or roots – of our lives. We're securely resting on Jesus. In practicing what he preached, we are also reminded to be consistent in our fruits.

## Part II: Be consistent in your fruit.

You and I don't have the ability to look into a person's heart and determine whether or not they have faith in Jesus. In the same way, no one can look inside our hearts to see whether or not we have faith. Only God's able to do that. So how are we to tell the difference? **"By their fruit you will recognize them,"** Jesus says. By listening to what comes out of a person's mouth or by watching how a person conducts their life, we can recognize whether that person is an authentic sheep or a wolf dressed up in sheep's clothing.

It's a simple law of nature that a certain plant produces a certain fruit. Thorn bushes produce branches with thorns on them. Thistles produce spiny leaves that hurt when you step on them. A grape vine produces grapes. A fig tree produces figs. A believer produces good works – good fruits. An unbeliever produces bad works – bad fruits. The teachings of a true prophet line up with everything else that God has revealed. The teachings of a false prophet contain omissions, or additions, or changes of meaning.

A true spokesman of Jesus will practice what he preached. You'll be able to recognize him by his fruit. This isn't to say that an authentic prophet of God will never sin. His life will be characterized by the same application of law and gospel that he applies to his hearers. But when he points to Jesus as the only Savior, forsaking any form of work-righteousness, we know that he's speaking the truth.

This part of Jesus' Sermon deals mainly with recognizing and avoiding false prophets. But it also carries an application for us, since we're all spokespersons for our Savior. The way we live our lives and the words that come out of our mouths either reflect favorably or reflect poorly on our God. We want to make sure that people can recognize us by our fruits. We want to bear consistent fruit so that God might be glorified through us.

It begins by going back to our roots, our foundation. Since we're founded on Jesus and rooted in him, we **"no longer live, but Christ lives in"** us. Our lives overflow in good deeds of thankfulness. Jesus urged toward the beginning of his Sermon on the Mount, **"Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."** We not only talk the talk, we walk the walk. Our actions do speak louder than words. And those actions will be visible for all to see when Jesus returns in glory. Those who've done good (because their faith leads them to serve their Lord) will enter eternal life. And those who've done evil (because deeds done without faith are repulsive to God) will go into eternal fire. So be firm in your foundation and be consistent in your fruit.

## Conclusion

If you want the perfect example of someone who practiced what he preached, whose actions spoke louder than his words, look at Jesus. He didn't just say he loved us. He showed us. He didn't just say sin was forgiven, but he became sin for us. He didn't just say we were righteous, but he gave his righteousness to us. He practiced what he preached. And thanks be to him for it! Amen.