

How to Be an Excellent Disciple, Fecundity

Luke 6:43-45

November 12, 2017

We are coming to the end of the Sermon on the Mount and just this week, actually, and next to finish it and don't want to waste any time this morning, but get right into the text. So Luke, chapter 6. We'll start reading in verse 39. Here is the conclusion of Jesus' sermon and here in the conclusion, we're finding some principles for discipleship. This is vital instruction for our discernment, for our protection, for edification as we grow into maturity as disciples of Jesus Christ.

And in what Jesus says here in the conclusion of his Sermon on the Mount, Luke 6:39 to 49, we've identified four principles that inform our discipleship. We've seen already the principle of authority in verses 39 and 40. We've seen the principle of humility. We covered that last week, verses 41 to 42. And today

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

we're considering the principle of fecundity, which is a word that means fruit bearing.

Then we're going to wrap up the series next week with the principle of fidelity in verses 46 to 49. So authority, humility, fecundity, and fidelity. The pursuit of those principles, those principles of discipleship, the pursuit of those principles evidences the true grace of God active in our lives. It proves the validity of our profession as his true disciples.

So as we like to do, let's start by reading the section before us this morning. We'll start in Luke 6:39. "He," Jesus, "also told them a parable: 'Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.

"Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take out the speck that is in

your eye," when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

"For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."

So the passage before us, verses 43 to 45, it's on bearing fruit. It's not difficult to interpret, to understand, but it does seem for many people today, and even Christian people, that these verses are very difficult to apply. People seem very reluctant to look at the fruit hanging on the trees around them and then to come to a judgment about the kind of tree they're looking at.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

Some people simply refuse to do so. In light of verse 39 and in light of verses 41 to 42, or I should say in light of verse 37, "Judge not, you'll not be judged. Condemn not, you'll not be condemned." In light of that verse, in light of verses 41 to 42 about beams and motes, I can understand the desire that some people have to be slow about making judgments. But to refuse to look at fruit, or to refuse to make judgment about the nature of the tree. That's unbiblical. That's unfaithful.

As we've seen in verse 37, Jesus warns us not to be judgmental, or censorious about our judgments. Verses 41, 42, he warns us about being hypocritical in our judgments. But being discerning, and making judgments, this is healthy. It's commanded. It's good for our spiritual well-being and the spiritual good of other people.

We must look at trees and their fruit. We must look at the fruit around us and come to proper right understanding about the nature of the tree. We're going to look at that. But before we get into our outline, I want to point out one important interpretive issue just as we get started. You'll notice in

GRACE CHURCH



Grace

verse 43 that it begins with the word, for. For. And that shows a connection between the section on clear sighted judgment, which we covered last week and then trees and their fruit, which we're going to cover now.

The word, for, it shows that these two sections are joined together, linked together. They are both of them developing Jesus' continuing argument. He's continuing to develop the same point that he started back in verse 39. That is, be careful who you follow. Be careful what voice you're listening to. Be careful who is influencing you. Whether that's a teacher, whether that's the people that you're with, the flock that you're a part of, friends you have, acquaintances, all of the rest.

Be careful who you follow, what voice you listen you to, and who is influencing you. That's abundantly clear that Jesus is concerned, though, about authority, concerned about spiritual authority and leadership when you look at the parallel over in Matthew's Gospel. You can just jot this down and read it later, Matthew 7:15 to 20. You'll see this saying that we have here.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

They are there set in the context of watching out for false prophets, for wolves that come to you in sheep's clothing.

The question is, do you have to be more clever? Do you have to be smarter than they are, than the false teachers who are wily by nature, who are scheming to get you, to take advantage of you? Do you have to be smarter or more clever than they are? No, you do not. Do you have to catch them in a scandal before you can know their nature and coming to a right judgment about their intentions and motives? No. Jesus says, "You will know them by their fruits."

Same thing here. Make sure you're not following a blind guide, verse 39. Because if you are, you will become just like your teacher, verse 40. And both of you will share in the same judgment, the same fate of falling into a pit. Or the more dramatic imagery is over in Matthew 7:19, "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

Very important to make sure you're not following the wrong voice, that you turn away from their error. But again, it's not

GRACE CHURCH



just simply about you watching out, who you follow as a teacher, it's about examining yourself, too. Remember, Jesus speaks directly to his disciples here. We all need to check our own lives for significant sin, for the blinding nature of pride, for spiritual hypocrisy. We all need to grow in genuine humility.

Jesus warns about those who influence us as teachers, yes that's true. But also, he warns us about our own lives. He warns us to look out for that, that beam in our eye because we are going to influence other people, as well. So that's the connection between verses 41 and 42, which we saw last week. And then verses 43 to 45 that we're going to look at today for us.

As Jesus' true disciples, we need to be on guard about any log-sized sin in our lives, any instance of hypocrisy, any evidence of it. We need to get rid of that blinding self-righteousness because it's such a serious issue with such serious dramatic, even damning consequences. We need to remove logs from our eyes. Why? For, verses 43 to 45, for when we do, it'll go, give us very clear vision about the trees and their fruits. Only good trees produce good fruit.

So that's the connection between those two sections. Helps us see a little bit more clearly the subject of our passage this morning. And it's simply this: The fruit you bear reveals the kind of tree that you are. The fruit you bear reveals the kind of tree that you are. The fruit that anyone bears is going to reveal the kind of tree he or she is. This is called the principle of fecundity, fruit bearing.

So armed with the clear vision provided by the humility that Jesus promotes in verses 41 to 42, Jesus here commands us to be fruit inspectors. To be looking at our own lives first and then look at the lives of others, particularly those who teach us the Word because their influence is so consequential. And this is why, beloved, that God intends our lives to be lived openly with one another. We need to live transparently before each other. We need to let people in, bring people close, live lives of transparency and intimacy. We're not to go home and shut everybody out. We're to live in the light and bring people into our lives.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

Well, just to get into our outline this morning, the subject this morning is this discipleship principle of fecundity, of fruit bearing and we're going to see the principle stated, illustrated, demonstrated, and then actuated. Stated, illustrated, demonstrated, then actuated. Those are four points. So first point for this morning, the principle stated. The principle stated. We see that in verse 43 going into that first part of verse 44. Look again at the text.

Jesus says, "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its fruit." There's the principle stated clearly, plainly, this principle of fecundity. That kind of a statement would be really nothing new to Jesus' audience. The people who were listening to him when he says this the very first time. Especially, they live in an agrarian society. People lived their entire lives surrounded by fields and vineyards. They saw things grow, things harvested, things planted all the time.

And this statement, also, as an analogy illustrating a deeper spiritual truth, that wouldn't be unfamiliar to them either.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

Especially to those who were raised in the culture so thoroughly informed by Jewish history and teaching. You want to turn back to the beginning of your Bible to the first chapter of Genesis. We find the origin of this principle in Genesis chapter 1. So it's as old as the earth, this principle of fecundity.

Genesis 1 is, as you know, creation week. On day three, God created the earth's vegetation. He created the light on day one. He separated the light from the darkness. Then on day two, he created an expanse and called it sky. Day two. On day three, he separated the water from the dry ground. And then he filled that dry ground with plant life, with vegetation, with produce, fruits, grains, vegetables.

Look at Genesis 1, verse 11 and following. "And God said, 'Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.' And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their kinds," their own kinds, "and trees bearing fruit in which is their

seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.”

So God created vegetation. The grass, the seed-bearing plants, the fruit trees, he created all that on the third day. Three classes of plant life, which comprehend the entire vegetable kingdom, the entire kingdom of vegetation, plant life. The grass, the *deše'*, the flowerless plants. They don't fructify one another. Secondly, there's the seed-bearing plants, the *ēšēb*, the vegetables and grains. And then third, the *ēš p^orî*, the fruit trees that bear fruit containing seeds.

God prescribed boundaries to that plant kingdom. Each plant contains the, the future of its own kind. Each one always and only according to its own kind bearing that kind of fruit. Vegetation grows reproduces within prescribed boundaries. So God, thus, created categories. Categories that we can observe empirically that we can see. We can categorize and classify. And you know what that requires? Logically, we must have categories that we may classify and organize.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

So God has set up the ability for us to do science, to make classification. This ability to classify, this provides the necessary preconditions of conducting all science. Here in pac, specific the field of botany so we can study the plant kingdom. This telltale sign of life, which began with the plant kingdom and continued with the animal kingdom is this principle of fecundity, of bearing fruit.

Water doesn't reproduce. The rocks of the earth don't reproduce. Sand on the beach, it doesn't reproduce. The granite in our Rocky Mountains doesn't reproduce. Fruit bearing is a sign of life. Principle that began the plant kingdom. Now this principle of fecundity found first in the plant kingdom, it's a uniform principle. That is to say, it is a law-like principle. It's a law of nature. One that's universal. One that's uniform. One that's invariable.

And that is the basis of science. Without it, we cannot do science. Science relies upon, even assumes as a starting point, this uniformity of this principle of fecundity in the plant kingdom. So take a botanist, for example, when he comes to study

any individual plant, he has to assume that this plant can be categorized according to the parent plant and that plant kind. He assumes that the specimen in front of him, on his table, shares all the same properties and qualities of the parent classification.

Not only that, but he assumes that whatever he studies in this individual specimen, whatever he learns from that individual piece of fruit or vegetable or whatever that that can be applied universally throughout the entire classification of that plant. So if one individual plant reacts a certain way to a disease or a pesticide, all the plants are going to react that way. They can extrapolate from the one to the many.

So from the particular to the general, from the general to the particular, the botanist can move from one to the other because of this God-designed uniformity in the laws of nature.

Otherwise, all scientific study, the law of inference would be absolutely impossible. And that's the botanist. That's the scientist.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

Think for a moment, for us non-scientists, how chaotic it would be for us as consumers of foods. Imagine what it would mean if we could not rely on the uniformity of this principle of fecundity in the plant kingdom. We also assume and rely upon those plants to remain as they are from season to season, don't we? What if we couldn't rely, count on an apple tree, to produce fruit after its own kind? Or an orange tree or wheat and barley or potatoes, and carrots, and onions?

What if one season you went out to pick an apple from a tree in your orchard, the next season you go out there and the tree is budding cattails. Very unhelpful. You just spent a lot of money on that orchard. Now it's gone. Or the weeds that you have been working so hard to poison for several seasons, you work really hard to eradicate them from your land. And all of a sudden, they start bearing luscious strawberries. Now you got to reverse course. You couldn't count on it from one season to another.

We realize that that's ridiculous because we've been born into a world that God made. We assume it's orderly. We assume its consistency. We assume the reliability, the uniformity, the

invariability of nature. God intended this from the very beginning. Because this is the kind of God who created everything, one who is orderly and reliable, consistent. He intended from the very beginning to sustain the world that he created, making it reliable, invariant within its categories and classes and kinds. We count on that.

Creation mandate that he gave us to cultivate the earth and care for it, we couldn't do that if God had not created the world with this uniform invariable principle of fecundity, the principle of life bearing, fruit bearing.

So let's turn back to Luke 6:43. Jesus simply states a principle that you and I take for granted every day of our lives. "No good tree bears bad fruit nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit for each tree is known by its fruit." Simple. ■ We assume, rely upon that principle, which not only sustains animal and human life, but it also enables us to interpret and to organize and to classify the entire world that we live in.

And now, we find this principle instructs us and it gives us an analogy for a more profound spiritual truth. Notice in verse 43 there's a contrast there between the good and the bad trees and the good and the bad fruit. We see that there. The adjective good is the word *kalos, kalos*, which is very common. It means something that's healthy or sound or fit.

The adjective, bad, for contrast is the word *sapros*, and it could refer to something that's, that's rotten or putrid, like rotting fish like something that's in a literal, a state of decay. But rotten trees are dying trees, right? They don't produce any rotten fruit; they produce no fruit. So the *sapros* here refers to something that's of, of poor quality, something that's useless, something that's inedible, something you don't want to put in your mouth.

So the contrast here between good and bad is, is qualitative, it's not moral. The moral judgment comes in the next verses. But here, it's just the contrast between the good and useful, and the bad and useless, between the edible and the inedible. And so as every farmer knows, good quality trees don't produce bad

quality fruit. Conversely, bad quality trees don't bear good quality fruit. And you sometimes have to wait until the fruit comes out to know the nature and the quality of your tree, right?

Principle of fecundity, then, amounts here to what we might call an agrarian tautology. They wouldn't maybe call it that, but it's just, they'd just say, hey, that's just plain. That's just the way it is. That's what they'd say. That's called a tautology. It's a universal truth. It's a principle that's so undeniably true because it's so patently obvious. When God plants, it always grows. What God plants always grows and always bears fruit. When cultivated, these plants yield a plentiful crop to field, to feed multitudes.

So principle stated. Secondly, second point for this morning, the principle illustrated. The principle illustrated. Jesus uses here a short illustration in the second half of verse 43 and he's just showing us with this little illustration how we assume this principle of fecundity in everyday life. All of us know this principle of fecundity. We know it instinctively. We know

GRACE CHURCH



Grace

it intuitively. We all know that a tree is known by the fruit it produces, because after all, verse 43, "Figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush." Simple. Obvious.

The principle of fecundity that is just stated is so obvious we might wonder why Jesus decided to illustrate it with this practice of everyday life. What he's just stated in verse 43 is so obvious. Trees are known by their fruit. Got it. So why illustrate it? By drawing attention to the common assumed practice of how everybody lives every day, Jesus is pointing out our own ability to see this connection. A connection we make all the time between the principle of fecundity, and we assume that, and we live by it in the physical world.

We see between the external visible fruit and the internal invisible nature of a thing; we see that connection. We all know the hidden nature by looking at the visible evidence. Listen, no one gathers fruit from thorns and thickets of thistles. Even insane people don't do that. No matter how crazy somebody is, they know where to go looking for food. They don't wander around

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

among thornbushes and thickets of weeds to find grapes or figs or anything edible. Even crazy people know that.

And if you see someone rooting around in weeds looking for food, you know they're nuts. That's the sign. So why is Jesus pointing this out? Because he's making a case. He's building a case. He's leading us all along. He's informing our consciences so that we will apply this principle of fecundity beyond the plant kingdom, beyond our edible food, and take it down into our spiritual life. That's what he wants us to see.

He wants us to understand and know how our understanding of the physical world informs our understanding of the spiritual realm. He uses the obvious common practice of all humanity to inform the consciences of his hearers, including you and me. ■ Today, he wants us to see that we need to put this principle of fecundity into practical use. Not just in picking good food, but spiritually in picking good truth, good teachers.

What you put into your mouth, where you go looking for it, same thing in the spiritual realm, right? What you put into your

heart, where you go looking for it, same principle.

Instinctively, intuitively, we all know that which cannot produce fruit does not produce fruit. So if we know the nature of a plant by the fruit it produces, we know the nature of a person by the works he produces.

The context, as we've said, has to do with discerning the difference between good and bad teachers. So just like knowing where our physical food comes from, we have to apply the same principle when it comes to spiritual food. You don't look for spiritual help from unspiritual people. You look to godly people, growing people, mature spiritual people for spiritual help. You will know them by their fruits, won't you?

So it's based on the principle of fecundity that God used to design the very world we live in. Just as plants that can't produce fruit, won't produce fruit, so also teachers who don't produce fruit can't produce fruit. They're blind hypocrites and they will not produce fruit. So when you come across teachers like that, just keep moving along. Walk away. In fact, run.

GRACE CHURCH

Look for godly, spiritual mature people who are producing good fruit, practicing good works. Look at their life. Look for the fruit. Follow them, learn from them. That Jesus spoke that sentence, he illustrated the principle and then he kept on moving into verse 45. The audience would've understood clearly the point he was making, would've followed his analogy and his argument.

But we, here, not in his presence but in his spiritual presence, but not in his physical presence, we have the advantage and the luxury of spending just a little more time in reflection on what he just said. Let's pause for a moment, consider the contrast. We've got figs and grapes, edible things on the one hand and we've got thornbushes and bramble bushes on the other hand. A little reflection here is just going to simply strengthen Jesus' point and inform our own consciences about this issue.

The word translated here as thornbushes is *akantha*. It refers to the prickly weeds that grow up in neglected fields. So when you prepare and cultivate a field for farming, I'm not a farmer, but I understand. I've been to farms before, and I've seen 'em

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

on TV. So I know that when you prepare and cultivate a field, so I'm told, farming involves removing these troublesome weeds. *Akantha*, these thorn-producing weeds, because they're harmful to the crops.

You may, ray, may remember the principle, the parable of the sower, Matthew 13, that some of the seed that the sower sowed fell among thorns, right? Same word. What did those thorns do? Choked out the Word, didn't it? Choked out the plant, took the life out of them, prevented a fruitful harvest. The word translated bramble bushes, that's the word *batos*, which is also translated thornbush. It's one that's larger than the common prickly weed, spiny thorny, shrub that was common to the area, grows up in the desert, symbolic all through Scripture of fruitlessness, a wasteland.

It's the word that identifies, actually, the burning bush that Moses saw in the desert when God first appeared to him in Exodus 3:2. This is that word. So used together, *akantha* and *batos* provide an image of the fruitlessness that all through Scripture

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

God saw in Israel. He saw this fruitlessness, this *akantha* and *batos* repeatedly in them over a long period of time.

Israel's fruitlessness often brought about his judgment, even their expulsion from the land into exile. In fact, the writer to the Hebrews, reminding his readers of that, pulls his readers back and warns them in Hebrews 6:7 to 8. "For the land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless, near to being cursed, its end is to be burned."

Fruitfulness receives blessing from God. Thorns and thistles, fruitlessness brings about the cursing of God, the judgment of God by burning, that's the warning. For everyone who listened to Jesus that day, with a Jewish cultural background or familiar with Jewish history, which was most if not everybody here in his presence on this day, this image of thorns and thistles, thornbushes and bramble bushes set in contrast to figs and grapes, Jesus' point is strikingly clear: Stay away from those

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

teachers who produce thorns and thistles, who are not producing figs and grapes because they lead you to judgment.

In fact, go back to the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount before Jesus started preaching. Notice in verse 17 it says, "Jesus came down stood on a level placed, great crowd of disciples and multitude of people from," where? "All Judea and Jerusalem." Why are they there? Only because God has allowed the remnant to return to Israel after being judged for being fruitless.

The people from Tyre and Sidon, they had observed this judgment take place as the, first the Assyrians, and then the Babylonians swept through the land and drove the people out. All these people knew, fruitlessness brings judgment and it's the teachers who led them astray. So Jesus is speaking very familiar language. Blessing for the fruit of obedience. Cursing for the thorns and thistles of disobedience.

The Old Testament is filled with this imagery especially in judgment context, where, where God there appealed through the

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

prophets to the consciences of the, of the people using this agrarian farmer language to sympathize, to help them to sympathize with God's concerns over an unproductive land. In Isaiah 5, God says, "Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard." And the love song that follows is really a lament because Judah was an unproductive vineyard. Even though God had invested so much.

Also, Ezekiel 19, the Lord laments there again over Israel. Also very poetic, "Your mother was like a vine in a vineyard planted by the water, fruitful, full of branches by reason of abundant water." Then later on, God says through Ezekiel, "But the vine was plucked up in fury, cast down to the ground. The east wind dried up its fruit. They were stripped off and withered. As for its strong stem, fire consumed it."

Very strong judgment passages and they're based all on this principle of fecundity. Namely, what God plants should grow, should bear fruit, should yield a plentiful crop. So when those who claim to be God's people, claim to be planted by God, when they don't grow and they don't produce fruit, well, what's the

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

problem? Did God let 'em down? Remember, whatever God plants, his plants always bear fruit. That's the principle we find in Genesis 1:11 to 13, day three, creation week.

Subversion of that principle. How is it that God could plant something, and it doesn't bear fruit? Because of sin. right? The subversion of this principle of fecundity, the thorns, the thistles, the thornbushes, the bramble bushes, you know what? That's also Genesis language. Remember what God told Adam in the curse?

Genesis 3:17 to 18, God said to Adam, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the fruit of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you."

This imagery in Luke 6 contrasting the figs and the grapes on the one hand, set in contrast with the unproductive thornbushes and bramble bushes, Jesus is setting us up for what he says in

verse 45. There is a moral component in this principle of fecundity. Bearing good fruit is connected with God's blessing. Bearing bad fruit is connected with his cursing. There's actually a hint of the warning in this illustration that he uses.

As Jesus said elsewhere, John 15, "Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, God takes that away. And anyone does not abide in me," Jesus says, "he's thrown away like a branch withers." No good fruit, only bad fruit. Evidence of one enslaved to sin, one who's still trapped under the curse. Those branches, though they identify with Christ, they're gathered, they're thrown into the fire, and they're burned.

That's the illustration. Just as we know instinctively not to go looking for edible fruit in the sin-cursed plants, the thornbushes, the bramble bushes, we demonstrate we understand intuitively this principle of fecundity. That which cannot produce fruit does not produce fruit. And now Jesus completes the transition moving from stating and illustrating the principle of fecundity in the physical world, demonstrating now

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

the spiritual significance of this principle for discipleship. And that's our third point. The principle demonstrated. The principle demonstrated.

As clearly, as you and I can see the principle of fecundity in the plant kingdom, Jesus sees just as clearly, more clearly, in the spiritual kingdom. This is how he sees the world. This is in fact what marks the true citizens of the kingdom of God as those planted by the Father in Heaven. That which God plants always bears fruit.

Look at verse 45, "The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good and the evil, perd, person out of his evil treasure produces evil. For out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaks." As I said back in verse 43, we saw a qualitative contrast between good and bad trees and good and bad fruit. Here, though, we see a moral contrast between good and evil. The qualitative contrast is appropriate for fruit. The trees and plants, they don't sin. But now that we're into the human realm, it's a moral issue. It's a moral issue.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

So unlike verse 43 where the word for good was *kalos*, here the word is *agathos*, moral goodness; moral virtue. Verse 43 used the word *sapros* to speak of poor-quality fruit, here in verse 45, the word is not *sapros*, which is useless, but *poneros*; refers to moral evil, moral wickedness. Wow! Our Lord has a very black and white view of the world, doesn't he?

He uses very politically incorrect categories of good and evil. I don't think he's caught up. He divides humanity into the good man and the evil man. And this binary set of categories, it doesn't fit very well in our modern world, does it? Jesus found it didn't fit very well in his world either. They crucified him for this kind of language. So we should expect the same kind of hostility if we follow him, if we think like he thinks, if we speak like he speaks.

And if we think and speak and behave like he spoke and thought and behave, you know what's going to happen? We're going to be bearing good fruit. It may bring hostility, but it's bearing good fruit. It's a first notice and in verse 45 there we have

the good man. Good man, morally good. He possesses moral goodness in the treasure room of his heart.

The word treasure is the word *thesauros*, which is where we get our word thesaurus. Thesaurus is a treasury of words and synonyms and antonyms. *Thesauros*, it could refer to the treasure itself, it could refer to the place the treasure is stored like a treasure chest or a vault. Because the good man's heart is filled good treasure, that's what he brings up from the vault. He's got nothing else there, but good treasure, moral goodness, moral virtue.

On the other hand, in verse 45, we've got the evil person. His heart, too, is a storehouse. It's got a treasure chest in it of evil, of wickedness, of bad intentions, and bad plans. Evil thoughts, evil desires, it's all festering there. So what he brings up from the vault into the surface of his life, though he try to restrain it, though he try to look good on the outside, it's full of evil. Most notable, most immediately perceived evidence of the evil in his heart is what comes out of his mouth. "For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."

GRACE CHURCH



Grace

The heart in Jesus' day, it wasn't like in our contemporary English, it wasn't the seat of emotions and feelings like we use the heart. Um, Valentine's Day and all that. It also didn't refer primarily to the muscle that pumps blood through our body; heart in that sense. The heart in the Hebrew and Greek mind and culture, it referred to the mind. It referred to the thought life. So biblically, the heart is the mission control center of your life. It's the place of your affections.

It's, it's where you find in you what you truly love and what you truly hate. All that is in your heart. It's the source of your thoughts, your intentions, your decisions, your motivations, your will. That's why, as William Hendriksen summarizes the verse, he writes this, "A person's heart is a reservoir, a storehouse, a thesaurus. What a man produces from this inner storehouse, whether good or bad, depends on what he was carrying in it. Whatever a person has set his heart on will sooner or later be revealed in his speech; therefore, what is in his heart is very, very important."

GRACE CHURCH



Greeley

Heart and mouth are connected, aren't they? Just as fingers and keyboards and keypads are connected. What you say, what you type, what you text, what you post, what you otherwise convey it comes out of your life. Whatever you communicate is coming forth from your heart. Now some of you may be thinking at this point, thinking about the good man from the good treasure in his heart.

You may remember Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. Who can understand it?" You may be thinking, wait a minute here. How can Jesus say that the good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good? Are there any good people? I mean, didn't the rich young ruler come to Jesus and say, Good teacher? And Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me Good. Not one is good except God alone."

So since Jesus said that, aren't we all evil? How could Jesus say this? Isn't moral badness a condition of all of our hearts? Well, yes, for all people. And then by God's amazing grace, no for some people. Let me explain. And I want to be really, really clear on this point. Jesus is not somehow here making a u-turn and advocating for some works/righteousness system. That is,

bear good fruit to become a good person. That's not what he's saying. That would contradict the rest of his teaching, along with the entirety of the old and, Old and New Testaments.

That's not what Jesus is saying. Rather, this here is Jesus' acknowledgement of the need for spiritual regeneration. ■ He acknowledges that. God must create a brand-new heart in all of his disciples. Jesus understands this. Let's think about this for a minute. First of all, moral evil is the condition, the natural condition of every heart that's born into this world, born into sin. We're all fallen creatures. We're born as evil and wicked. We're dead in trespasses and sins, Ephesians 2, by nature children of wrath.

Jesus repeatedly acknowledges that fact in Matthew 7:11. He says that "We, being born into sin, are evil." There's a passage very similar to this one in our text here over in Matthew 12:33 to 35. And Jesus makes the same point as he condemns the Pharisees. He says, "Either make the tree good and its fruit good or make the tree bad and its fruit bad. For the tree is known by its fruit." And then he says to the Pharisees, "You brood of vipers!

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

How can you speak good when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good. The evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.”

These religious leaders, scribes, Pharisees, teachers of the law, all the up-and-coming people in Judah and Jerusalem and all through the land of Israel, all the people who were looked up to in that society, Jesus makes a summary judgment, “You brood of vipers! How can anything good come out of you who are evil?”

Religious hypocrisy is the worst kind of hypocrisy.

So Jesus, he assumes in this text, tacitly affirms that among his true disciples, no good will come out of them until regeneration takes place. They must be born again. They must become new creatures. Regeneration must precede any good deeds. Any deeds of God that comes out of a life, regeneration has to happen first. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he’s a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the news has come,” 2 Corinthians 5:17.

GRACE CHURCH

"The new self," Ephesians 4:24, is "created after the likeness of God and true righteousness and holiness." That's the situation for the new man. Then along with the doctrine of regeneration, Jesus can see ahead the doctrine of justification by faith. It's based on his own substitutionary atonement for the sins of all who believe. It's based on the imputation of his own righteousness to the believing sinner.

He sees the doctrine of sanctification and glorification before him. The perfection of the saints in glory. He knows that those whom God foreknew, Romans 8:29 and 30. "Those whom God foreknew God had predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Those whom he predestined he also called, those whom he also called he also justified, those whom he justified he also glorified." The whole thing he sees.

So in Luke 6:45, the evil person out of his evil treasure who produces evil, that's the sinner. That's the one remaining in his fallen condition. Even if he's sitting in church. Even if he's a Pharisees. Even if he's a teacher. He's producing evil,

bearing bad fruit, that's the sinner. He's still in his fallen condition. He cannot help but bring forth the evil that's resident within his fallen heart. He remains in that condition. He will face God on judgment day and he will be condemned to an eternity in hell. That's what Jesus says.

But the good person, who out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, that's the regenerate believer. That's the one who knows Jesus Christ as Savior from all sins and Lord of all life. That's the one whose sin is forgiven, who's united to Christ by faith, the one whose covered by the righteousness of Jesus Christ and follows him in loving obedience and worship.

Telltale difference between the two: it's the speech. "For out of the abundance of his heart his mouth speaks." Again, think about what you say, what you type, what you text, what you post, or otherwise communicate because it reveals what's in your heart and you cannot hide it. Just quickly, I want to show you this over in Galatians chapter 5, just as an illustration.

GRACE CHURCH



Grace

Galatians 5 and look at verse 16, I want to illustrate this for you. Paul wrote this letter to a very young church in southern Galatia; it's the central part of modern-day Turkey. He found it necessary to confront this church and then correct their doctrine and behavior because it wasn't in line with the Gospel. And in this passage here in Galatians 5:16 and following, you're going to see how his correction starts with internal attitudes and affections, and then it, conf, connects those internal affections with external behaviors.

Galatians 5:16 and 17, "But I say, walk by the spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the spirit, the desires of the spirit are against the flesh. These two are opposed to each other to keep you from the things you want to do." Look at the language there. Desires, um, things you want to do, things of the flesh, things of the spirit, that's all talking about internal stuff.

Desires of the flesh, desires of the spirit, the Holy Spirit. The desires of the flesh, that refers to carnal affections. Things that lead you into sin, committing sins and that's

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

contrasted with spiritual affections, which are produced, by the way, not in you by you, but in you by the Holy Spirit. It's a God's work. Keep reading there.

Verse 18, "But if you're led by the spirit, you're not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these." That's one list. And Paul warns you that if you are in that list, he says, "I warn you as I warned you before that those who do such things or practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

But the fruit of the spirit, the fruit of the tree planted by God, the fruit of the spirit is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."

The works of the flesh, those are produced by carnal affections, which are natural to us and those who commit those sins will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit, notice the fruit and the source. This is the Holy Spirit's fruit, not ours. It's not

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

generated from us. This is God's work produced by the Spirit in the life of everyone planted by God.

The same God who said, "Let there be light [...] let the earth bring forth fruit trees bearing fruit." It's the same God who calls forth new life in you and in me. And it will bear fruit. Go back to Luke 6:45 and we'll wrap this up. We just read in Galatians 5:22. You can see there it's not just what we say that's the fruit of the regen, of regeneration, but it's all that we think and all that we do.

But Jesus has referred here in Luke 6:45 to the mouth, what comes out of the mouth reveals what's in the heart. And he uses the mouth here as a metaphor to really represent all that's produced in one's life. So what comes out is evidence of the heart condition. It involves the affections. It's produced by the affections, those things you truly love and those things you truly hate. The affections, which you cannot help but are endemic to your nature. Those affections will produce the speech and the behavior that becomes the telltale sign of those true heart affections. What you really are.

So that said, especially in this context, the mouth is an especially appropriate metaphor. Because the mouth reveals the heart like no other instrument of the body. Listen to the words. You'll discern the condition of the heart. As Job says, Job 12:11, "Does not the ear test words as the palate tastes food?" Doesn't the ear test words as the palate tastes food? Yeah, indeed it does. Or we could say, as the mouth tastes good fruits like figs and grapes, so also the ear tests words to discern whether they're good in sound, rational and irrational, moral or immoral, evil or good. Speech reveals the condition of the heart.

So we've seen now the principle stated, illustrated, and demonstrated. Let's consider a final point here. The principle actuated. The principle actuated. And by actuated, I mean that this principle is to be put into action. Here's how we're going to do that. First, make sure you are converted. Make sure that you're truly a Christian, because there's no true fruit without true conversion, without a true new heart.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

There are a lot of fake Christians out there, and they're giving true Christianity a really bad name by their association and by all their toleration practice of sin and all their spiritual hypocrisy. So check your own life. Use those lists in Galatians 5, the works of the flesh, the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Honestly, prayerfully before God, even inviting the scrutiny and honest assessment of godly mature Christians like elders. See which list you belong to. The works of the flesh, or the fruit of the spirit.

What is your heart desire? Where do you go when you're in your private moments and your private thoughts? Does your mind and your heart go toward sin and self-centeredness and self-centered pleasures? Or does it desire the Word of God? Does it desire the practice of righteousness? Does it desire the fellowship of the saints? Are you proclaiming the Gospel, or do you keep silent about the Gospel and spiritual matters in public places, because after all our world has changed? And we can't really speak like Jesus speaks anymore. It'd get us in a lot of trouble.

GRACE CHURCH



Greeley

If you examine yourself and you find that you're not a true Christian, repent of your sin because God is eager to forgive. Repent of your sin and embrace the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Recognize that God alone is absolutely holy and that before him, you're a wretched sinner. You deserve his just judgment. You can do nothing to save yourself. You can do nothing to erase your many sins of thought and word and deed before a holy, all-seeing, all-knowing God.

So you must look to the only one who can save you, that is your lawgiver and your judge. He's also your Savior. God sent his one and only Son Jesus Christ to live a perfect sinless, spotless life. And then God sent Jesus to the cross to pay the penalty of death demanded by his holy justice. Jesus went to that cross not for his own sins, but as the perfect and the only substitute to die for the sins of all who will ever believe.

"God made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf in order that we might become the righteousness of God in him." So if you'll repent of your sins, turn completely away. If you'll deny yourself and follow Jesus Christ as your one and your only Lord

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

and master, God will save you of your sins. He'll forgive you. You'll be a regenerate person. You become converted. You'll have a new nature producing new, good fruit, for the good person out of the good treasure of his heart he and he alone produces good fruit. So make sure you're converted. Make sure you're a true Christian, not a phony.

Secondly, second way to apply this or to actuate this principle. Apply the principle of fecundity to your practical Christian life. That is to say, don't be disobedient and refuse to make judgments. Jesus intends that we make good judgments here. First about ourselves, and then about other people. So make sure you're bearing fruit. Like the love that Jesus commands in verses 27 to 38 that we've already covered. That is an other-worldly love that's only found in Jesus Christ.

I might add, make sure you're producing fruit looking unto Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of your faith. Look at his life and see if his life is being reproduced in your life by the Holy Spirit. Look to your thought life. Look to your desires and your affections and see if they accord with Scripture. As it says in

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

Proverbs 4:23, Keep, or watch over or even guard, “keep your heart with all vigilance for from it flows the issues of life.”

Remove the beam so that you can see yourself clearly. And then you can see clearly to help your brother and your sister with their specks, or their beams. In the humility of self-examination, we’re now able to see clearly so that we can help one another grow in bearing the fruit of a converted life.

Also, as you are looking around, looking at yourself, looking at your neighbor, your brother, your sister, watch out for false prophets. Watch out for false teachers. Watch out for fake Christians because as Paul said what we read out of 2 Timothy chapter 4, those false teachers, false Christians, fake Christians are going to proliferate in these last days. We’re watching that.

False teachers are absolutely destructive to your spiritual growth. They’ll lead you down into a hole. They’ll lead you into shipwreck because they’re riding on a ship that’s going to be wrecked. Fake Christians, they’re like tares that the enemy has

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

sown among the wheat. They choke out the other plants. They sully the reputation of genuine Christianity. You'll know them by their fruits.

Watching fruits produced in a life takes time. It doesn't take 10 or 20 or 80 years, it takes maybe months. Watch the growth of fruit. What God plants always grows. It always bears good fruit. So look for good fruit. And judge it as such because out of the good treasure of the regenerate heart good fruit will grow. It must do so because of the God-ordained, God-designed principle of fecundity, essential for our discipleship.

Let's bow in a word of prayer. Father, we want to thank you for what we've learned again from our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for teaching us through his amazing Sermon on the Mount. We thank you that we are not lost but found and saved. We thank you that you have forgiven us of our sin, given us clear eyes to see. We pray that you would keep us from sin, that we might see clearly and judge correctly and be safe, guided to our heavenly home by your Holy Spirit. As we produce the works that you have ordained before the foundation of the world that we should walk in them, according to Ephesians 2:10. We pray, Father, that you would make us productive and fruitful, useful for your purposes.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

We pray that you would help us to, to grow, to manifest your glory by calling attention to Jesus Christ.