

Shut Your Mouth If You Do Not Have The Fruits of Repentance (1 or 2)

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John the Baptist on Repentance

By Tim Conway

Bible Text: Luke 3:7-8

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Grace Community Church

1624 E. Commerce Street

San Antonio, TX 78205

Website: www.gccsatx.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/gcc

Open your Bible to Luke chapter three.

Luke is the human author of the third gospel in our Bibles. This man was, of course, described as the beloved physician by the apostle Paul. Any of you guys know where that is? Do any of you guys know where it says... do you know where Luke is called the beloved physician?

That is a good guess, brother.

It is in the epistles and I will narrow it down. It is one of the three that starts with a C. It is Colossians chapter four. And now, guys, if you had asked me a week ago I might have been scratching my head, too. I actually looked to see where it said that.

Luke was a physician. Luke was a doctor. But have you ever heard Luke called anything else? Luke is also an accomplished historian, really he is. And if you have not noticed before today, I want you to notice with me just the amazing ability that this man had to write the Scriptural accounts. He does it in a way that I really don't think any of the other New Testament writers even compare to. The man was incredibly gifted in this area.

You guys know, God used Luke to write 52 chapters of the New Testament. Sometimes we forget that. You know, he wrote an immense amount, because we forget that he wrote the book of Acts.

You know that the gospel, this third gospel that we are now studying, from the very beginning of it all the way to the end of the book of Acts is basically one biblical historic account. And when you look through there you will notice the meticulous detail that he gives to naming times and places and names. And if you have not noticed that before, I know we read this text last week. You might have read right through it. Maybe you didn't notice this at all. But I want you to notice the detail. Pay particular attention.

Luke chapter three verse one through three. Just notice the depth of detail here.

“In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar...”¹

Very specific, very particular.

Now you guys know today we basically look at time in the western world based on the birth of Christ. And even with that there is some inaccuracies. But that is basically our vantage point. Back then humanly speaking the greatest kingdom upon the face of the earth at that time was which nation? It was Rome. Humanly speaking the most powerful leader on the face of the earth at that time was the Caesar. And so it makes perfect sense that they would have figured their time according to the reigns of these different Caesars which is exactly the type of detail that Luke gives us, “Fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar.”²

If that is all Luke would have said, that really would have pinpointed exactly what it was. But for Luke the historian that just simply isn't enough.

“...Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene...”³

You know, he is not enough to stop right there. Now he has got to tell us about the high priesthood.

“...during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.”⁴

It wasn't just enough for him to call him John. He has got to tell us very specifically he is “the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”⁵

Like I say, I just don't think that there is any other New Testament writer that even comes close to giving us the kind of historical data that Luke does. And if you have missed it up to this point, all you have got to do is go back a page or two in your Bible.

Let me just very quickly, folks, look at this. Chapter one of Luke's gospel, chapter one verse five. All I want you to do right at this moment is just notice how particular Luke is about giving us details.

“In the days of Herod...”⁶

¹ Luke 3:1.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Luke 3:2.

⁵ Luke 3:2-3.

⁶ Luke 1:5.

That tells us the time. But he goes on. He describes Herod. He is very descriptive.

“...king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah...”⁷

But he doesn't just stop there. He had got to give us this the more depth here.

“...of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.”⁸

And then if you jump right over to verse 26.

“In the sixth month...”⁹

What does he mean by sixth month? Well, six months from the time of the prior event which was when the angel appeared to Zechariah.

Now, “...the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed...”¹⁰

Not just betrothed, but betrothed to a man, not just any man, but a man whose name was Joseph, not just any Joseph, but this Joseph was of the house of the David. The virgin's name was Mary.

I mean, this goes on.

Look at the beginning of chapter two.

“In those days...”¹¹

Well, what days? Well, the days that he just got done speaking about where Zechariah gave the prophecy after the birth of John the Baptist.

“ In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered,”¹² or taxed.

But notice how specific Luke is.

This was the first registration [you know which one, the one] when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Luke 1:26.

¹⁰ Luke 1:26-27.

¹¹ Luke 2:1.

¹² Ibid.

Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David.”¹³

All this detail. And it shows up over and over.

You know, another thing that really strikes me anyways is in verse 36 of chapter two when he speaks about the prophetess Anna. It is not just enough to say, “Well, there was this old prophetess who hung around the temple and she didn’t depart from there and she came in that hour and gave thanks.”

He has... not Luke. He can’t just say that. He has to say:

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer.¹⁴

Folks, this is not—as some people think—just some random collection of moral teachings gathered together by men and thrown in together into this book. You guys, Luke simply leaves us no doubt, no question that what we find here in this book is actual, factual, historical times, places, people, events and words. And they really happened.

You guys, these accounts here, John the Baptist is just as real as your next door neighbor. Do you realize that? Where you have this kind of meticulous detail the thing it tells us is at times the places, the events are not products just of somebody’s imagination. Somebody didn’t come along and write a bunch of fiction here. This isn’t a bunch of dreamed up stories. These are things that actually happened in the course of time, actual events from the flow of world history.

You guys, John the Baptist’s ministry is just as much a fact of history, just as much has a place in time and space as man walking on the moon or the pilgrim’s landing at Plymouth Rock or the US involvement in World War II, just as real.

Do you guys realize a man John living in the day of Tiberius and Pontius Pilate and Herod and Philip and Lysanias and Annas and Caiaphas is just as much a reality as me speaking to you in a day of George Bush and Rick Perry. It is just the same. There is no difference.

Now no difference. Folks, when we are told that the Word of God came to John the son of Zechariah, do you know one thing you can do? You can believe that it came to him. The Word of God came to him. This really happened. There was actually a man named John who had the Word of the Lord come to him and when it came to him he spoke it. And we start to find out what it was he spoke in verses seven through nine.

¹³ Luke 2:2-4.

¹⁴ Luke 2:36-37.

I know, guys, that there is no air conditioning coming out of these things [?].

Well, you guys are going to have to bear with me. We will find out this week what has happened, but as God comes among us and causes the heat not to distract or to cause us to become tired can do that.

Ok, guys. Bear with me. Hang with me here because I think what has to be said from this message is essential. It is essential to your life. It is essential to your eternity. It is essential to your well being, what I say today. It is essential. It is essential to your eternal soul because if you guys miss what is being said here—and a lot of people miss. Understand. What I am saying to you guys today there are souls, there are some of you who sit here today who will miss what I say or you will not believe what I say. You will not take seriously what I say and you will go out that door or you will let the heat distract you. You will grow tired. You will grow weary. These words will go right over your head. You will go out that door today and one day these words will come back to haunt you. I fear that.

We are going to look right now at words that have rung true for 2000 years. And I want them to ring true in our ears today. We have vast multitudes of people in this country who miss these words. They don't believe them. They have never heard them or they have heard them and they explain them away. But I told you about the factuality, the actuality, the historicity of the things that Luke has said because I want you to understand. These are not the figments of a man's imagination. This is the Word of God. The Word of God actually came to the man John and what he has to speak to us is from the mouth and the heart of God.

Listen to me. Look at your Bibles right now in Luke chapter three verse seven. You have, after the verse six verses which were all introductory, you actually have John now preaching. And here are his actual words.

You guys, if you just read this as though it is a long oft ago story, true, not true, you are not certain. But if you will bring this home to your hearts and minds right now, this is an actual account spoken by a man of God and applicable to you.

I want you to try to imagine John the Baptist coming into this place right now taking this pulpit and speaking these words to you. Take these personally. Listen to what he says.

“He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, ‘You brood of vipers!’”¹⁵

Now some of you are already thinking in your minds, I know, because you know the Bible well enough and you are already thinking about Mathew's account and you are saying, “Oh, I know. He said these words to the Pharisees and to the Sadducees.”

¹⁵ Luke 3:7.

I will beg to differ with you. Did he say these words to the spiritual leaders in that day? Yes. Matthew tells us that. But as much as it is true that he did particular point these words at the spiritual leaders, the Sadducees and the Pharisees on specific occasions, no doubt, Luke as well tells us that he spoke these words to the whole crowd as well. He spoke them to the whole crowd as well.

Now you guys have to understand this. This man's ministry went on for some time. What we have is just a clip. You have a glimpse into the life of John. He was preaching this way, speaking this way day after day. This was not a one time occasion. He was speaking this way when the Sadducees and the Pharisees came up, but he spoke this way to the overall crowd as well. We have a crowd here. Hear what he says.

“You brood of vipers.”¹⁶

Basically, offspring of snakes.

Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.¹⁷

One of the things that hits you immediately about John's preaching is John's lack of any kind of effort whatsoever to win the people over with smooth talk.

You may say, “Well, yes. I mean, I see this guy. You know, he is just a rough character. I know guys like that.”

Folks, whatever you do with John the Baptist you cannot dismiss him as if some radical religious fanatic. You can't do that.

I know some of you guys have probably seen some movie or some show at some time. This is one of the reasons that I just don't like depictions of the gospel accounts because what you have got generally is some [?].

Have you guys ever seen the way they depict John the Baptist? He is some half crazed, got this lunatic look in his eyes, out in the wilderness. You know what I mean if you have seen any of it. That is how they make him out. A lot of times that is what we think. But I am telling you. You cannot write this guy off as some oddball nutcase out eating grasshoppers in the wilderness. You simply can't do that.

Some guy out there needlessly provoking people with hard words. You don't want to do that.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Luke 3:7-9.

And do you know why you don't want to do that? Because this was God's man.

You guys, he had the Spirit of birth. The next time you guys a man that had the Spirit of God from birth, from his mother's womb, I would advise you to listen to him. You are likely to find a very godly man there.

Do you know what else it says about him? It says that the Word of God came to him.

Do you know what that is saying? God spoke to him.

Now we have got lots of people today that say, "Oh, God told me this and God spoke that to me."

Folks, I am not talking about those quacks. I am not talking about this deceivers. I am talking about a man who truly had God speak to him. And if you can find a man who God truly has spoken to, I would advise you, you ought to listen to him.

Do you know what else it says? Do you know what the angels said about John? He would be great before the Lord.

Christ said, "Up to that time," now he was preaching specifically about the kingdom of heaven. But he said up to that time there had been nobody born greater than John the Baptist.

I am here to tell you this. If the angel of God says this man is going to be great before the Lord and Jesus Christ himself says that there was none born of women greater than that man, then I am here to tell you, folks, if God's estimation of a man is that he is great, you ought to listen to him. This half crazed fanatical look in his eye nut case that they portray through Hollywood is not what we are talking about here.

Yes, this man spoke strong words. Yes, they may have even been harsh words, but you just remember this, folks. This was God's man preaching God's Word. He was preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. You do well to listen to him.

Now hear me here, folks. If a man is great in God's account and if God says somebody is great, God really knows what greatness is. If he was great what is greatness?

I will tell you. True greatness, the greater a man is the greater that he resembles the image of Jesus Christ. You can't get away from that. Christ is the truly great man and anybody else is only as great inasmuch as they measure up to him. And I will tell you this about Christ. He was a lover of God and he was a lover of man. And if John was great it was because he resembled that.

Would anybody, could anybody in this room argue that fact, that to be great before the God you have got to be a lover of God and a lover of men? And if you are not those

things, you are not great in God's sight because those are the two great commandments, folks. They are the great commandments and you can't be great unless your life is consumed with the...

You say, "Ok, brother. All right. I buy that. But what does that have to do with the text? How does that fit in?"

Well, just this. This man looked at that crowd and he said, "You brood of vipers!"¹⁸

He said, "The axe is laid to the root."¹⁹ And it is ready to bring these trees down. And God is holding that axe.

This is a very strong approach. Some may think it is too strong. It is too harsh. We can't deal with people that way.

But, again, I will remind you, this is the approach of God's man. This is the message that God wanted brought. He was clear. John was clear with the message and that is the issue, clarity, straightforwardness in giving the message. That is how John did it. That is how he did it.

You see, people, strong even sometimes harsh dealing with people is not inconsistent with love. Being hard with people is not inconsistent with love.

Now, folks, hear me. It can be. It can be because we have the capacity. You and I have the propensity to be unrighteously harsh with people. That is true. But there is a righteous harshness. John called on people to turn from their sin and embrace the Messiah. He did it with strong language. He did. But, folks, look at what we are comparing this to.

Look what is happening out in the world. We have this weak, limp wristed...

Where are the John the Baptists today? Where are they? Where are the men with a passion for souls for like that?

You know what? You have got these people. You have seen it. Any of you that have watched that Ray Comfort stuff on evangelism. You have seen it. They come up to him.

Did you ever talk to people about hell? Have you ever talked to people about wrath? Have you ever talked to people about sin?

They sit there and think, "No, no, I don't do that. I don't say that."

No, what do they say?

¹⁸ Luke 3:8.

¹⁹ Luke 3:9.

Well, I tell them that there is this God that loves them a whole lot and he just wants to make them happy.

You guys know it. You have heard it. You show me where John or Paul or Christ or Isaiah or Jeremiah or Ezekiel ever spoke like that, ever.

You know what, folks? People don't like prophets. They don't like them. It is not just because they wear strange clothes and eat strange food. It is because of the words they speak.

There is this minimalistic kind of evangelism. What I mean by that is just the minimum, I mean, barely... you know what it is like. Somebody is coaxed and coached into saying a few little words.

"I am a sinner. I thank you, God, for dying for me."

And they had some guy that stood there and threw a handful of Scriptures at them out of place, out of context, misunderstood, usually come from the book of Romans. And now they happily dance off and they think they have had this great soul winning success.

And this person, do you know what happens to them? They say this little prayer. They go off. They live their life just like before. They live their life just as wicked, just as worldly, only the difference now is they call themselves a Christian.

And we look at Christianity in this world with all of its statistically just as many divorces, just as many abortions and we look at what is wrong with the Church today, what is wrong? The wrong is you have got men standing in pulpits all over this country that are no different than these people out in the streets that do this kind of evangelism. It is weak. It is pathetic and God doesn't use it to save souls.

Folks, John the Baptist said it like it was. I mean, I would challenge any of you to find fault with what he said. You can't. Those people, not just the spiritual leaders, those people, they were the offspring of serpents.

And do you know what? So are you and so am I myself by nature. We have come into this world.

Guys, do you realize what happens? Do you realize what happens today? You cannot stand in a pulpit and talk about sinners, talk about fools, talk about unrighteous, talk about the wicked, talk about the evil, because you know what? Nobody sitting there thinks they are those things. You can come in here lost as anything. You could have got drunk all night last night. You could have jumped in bed with prostitute from this neighborhood over here, but nobody thinks they fit that description because everybody knows somebody that is worse than they are.

Everybody says, “I am not wicked. I know somebody that is, but I don’t fit that.”

Well, do you know what God’s Word says? We all fit it. We all are evil. We all are wicked. We are all in that state by nature. And what John is telling these people is: Unless you repent, you are that person. You are a snake. Your parents were vipers, you are vipers. And do you know what? This is probably John’s language. This is probably John’s way of expressing that they are children of the devil.

And do you know we look at ourselves and do you know what, folks? These words are not shocking because they are false. They are shocking because men are so self righteous. That is why man can’t hear this. That is why it sounds harsh and strong. It is not because it isn’t true. It is because men are deceived about how they are. Everybody thinks they are just pretty good people.

I will guarantee you. If you don’t believe me, all you have got to do is go door knocking with us sometime. I will take you to 10 doors and I will show you 10 people lost as anything and those 10 people all think they are pretty good people. And do you know what? You have got John the Baptist coming on the scene here and he is saying, “You are not good people. You aren’t. You are not.”

And do you know what he says?

“Don’t you dare say... don’t say it. Don’t you say it.”

People are wicked. People are corrupt and do you know what they want to say?

“We have got Abraham as our father. I am a Jew.”

Now, guys, you have to understand who he is dealing with. He is dealing with Jews. He knew where they were coming from. When we go to the doors out here or even some of you that sit in this room right now, the issue isn’t that you think you are a Jew, but do you know what? You will be just as quick to open your mouth because everybody is. Everybody wants to justify themselves. Do you know what he says?

He says, “Bring for fruits that are in accordance or worthy of repentance.”

That is what he says. John was plain. Do you know what? He was a lover of the souls of men, but he knew the reality that men and women are constantly diving into false religion, shallow religion, powerless religion. He knows it is a problem. He knows people all over the place.

Guys, don’t you see? This is what Jesus Christ is saying.

“Many are going to come to come in that day and they are going to say, ‘Lord, Lord.’”

He didn't say a few. He said many. Do you know the bulk of mankind is going to come to Jesus Christ on judgment day and they are going to say, "I was religious. I was good. I was there. I was doing miracles in your name. I was casting out demons. I was... I was..."

And John says, "Shut your mouth. Don't say anything. If you don't bring forth works, good fruit in your life that is accordance with repentance, then you shut your mouth. There is nothing you can say. There is nothing you can say. If you don't have works that verify your repentance, that you can possibly say to justify yourself." That is what he says.

You see, he knew it. He knew the hearts of men. He knew that they came to him. He knew they were likely to be deceived by false, shallow repentance. And he says, "Nope. We are going into these baptismal waters. And I am going to show you a picture here when you go under and you immerse yourself in that water, this is a picture of a totally consuming, totally encompassing repentance. And when you have that repentance in your life which, by the way, goes hand in hand with the forgiveness of sin, you don't have repentance, you don't have forgiveness of sin.

Christ said it, "Unless you repent, you will perish."

And John realizes this and he realizes there is no forgiveness of sin if there is not repentance. And there is no repentance unless there are works that give indication that that repentance is true. And he says no matter what else may be true about your life, you shut your mouth if you don't have those fruits of repentance.

Just keep those lips still because there is nothing you can say. Nothing if you don't have those in place in your life. Nothing you can say at all.

And do you know what he says to them? He doesn't say this to be mean and cruel spirited and a nasty fanatic out there on those fields in the wilderness by the Jordan when he says, "Who told you to flee from the wrath to come?"

You guys, it was a rhetorical question. What I mean by that is he wasn't expecting an answer. He knew nobody was telling them to flee from the wrath to come. Do you know how I knew that? Do you know how I know that to be true?

Christ looked at the crowds and he said, "You went out there in the wilderness." And he didn't say, "I know you went out there because you were fleeing from the wrath to come." He said, "You went out there because you heard there was a prophet out there and you went out there to find a prophet, yea, and more than a prophet."

And do you know how else I know that they didn't flee from the wrath to come because somebody had told them? Because right away he turns around and says to them, "Don't you put your trust in being related to Abraham."

You see, people don't flee from wrath to come if they don't believe that there is any wrath coming towards them because they are Jews. They weren't fleeing. He is saying this because he is wanting to warn them. There is a wrath to come.

This is serious, folks. There is a wrath to come. I know. I fear. As the way I read the Scripture, on Judgment Day everybody is going to be held in account. And do you know what? The Scripture says that Christians are going to judge angels. And I have a feeling, folks, on Judgment Day that true Christians are going to be called to give account of those that they spoke the truth to that never repented. And I fear that some in this room, I fear there are some that hear my voice right now and the wrath of God is going to swallow you up.

As certain as John preached, as certain as I am preaching the wrath of God, it is going to swallow you up. And it is coming. It is coming, folks. It is bearing down on you. When you come to the Scriptures and you talk about there is language about being cast alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur, when it talks about wailing and gnashing of teeth, when it talks about the blackness of darkness forever. Some of you that hear my voice right now because you will not repent, do you know? Hear with me. Luke says that Jude says it is reserved for them.

Do you know what "reserved" means? It has your name on it. There is a place that is waiting specifically for you.

You see, folks?

"The axe is laid to the root of the trees."²⁰

Do you know what that...?

If you have ever done any chopping with an axe, you know what that means. Sometimes you take the axe and you lay it right there where you are going to chop. It is almost like your baseball bat or, you know, he puts the bat out there. But the lumber jack will lay that axe right where he is going to chop and then he swings back. That is the picture here. God has set the axe right at the root of the tree. This tree is not bearing fruit and God is ready to chop it down and you are that tree. And there is no fruit. And fruitless trees are absolutely good for nothing except their utter destruction because, folks, the Scripture tells us about vessels of wrath in Romans chapter nine that are being fitted for destruction. And the way God is going to get glory with you, because do you know what Christ says?

"My Father is glorified by your very much fruit, but you don't bear much fruit, you don't bear any good fruit. And so God is going to get his glory in your life by your destruction and by showing his wrath in all of his power, in his fierce anger upon you as a vessel of wrath."

²⁰ Luke 3:9.

And, folks, if I stopped right here I know what would happen. Somebody in this room would say, "I know that I don't have forgiveness for sin unless I have repentance. I understand that."

Christ said, "Unless you repent, you will likewise perish."

There is no forgiveness of sins outside of repentance. You may go out of that door today and you may understand that. You may understand what John says. Repentance is nothing unless you bear fruit consistent with that.

Do you know what? Over in Acts 26 the apostle Paul speaks about good deeds that are consistent with repentance or in keeping with repentance. Good deeds and good fruit, folks are the same thing.

But, see, I am afraid of this. I am afraid as much as you know that you have to have repentance to have forgiveness of sins and to be saved, as much as you know you need to be a bearer of good fruit to be demonstrating that, in fact, there is true repentance in your life, yet you may yet go out that door and misunderstand what the Bible says a good fruit is and you may look at the fruit in your life and it may be bad as anything, but you mistake it for good fruit. And so you go on your way thinking everything is ok and then to your horror one day you wake up and hear those words, "Lord, Lord..."

Or you hear those words, "Depart from me, you workers of iniquity." And you are saying, "Lord, Lord."

So what do we do? What can we say about this?

Well, let me say just a couple of things real fast to you. One thing is this. You remember what the prophet Isaiah says in Isaiah 64. He says, "Your righteous deeds are filthy rags."

He looks at fallen mankind but he says, "The righteousnesses, the good things that they do in their lives are dirty, filthy, nasty, rotten things in the sight of God."

So I want you to understand. The things the world does that they think are good... You know, at Christmas time they will hand money to the beggar on the side of the street and they stop at the stop light or they will have one of these agencies that wants money come to their work place at that time of the year and they give money to it. Or they go visit their mother in the nursing home or they buy presents for their children or they feed their husbands or whatever.

I want you to understand, folks, the world does those things. I told you last week, you can't flip a hamburger and do it righteously in the sight of God if you have not truly repented and are not in Christ Jesus. You just simply can't do it. Everything about your life, understand that. A lost person does nothing but sin. All their fruit is bad. Some of it to our human eye looks ok.

And, see, we are prone to mistake it. Let me give you a few hints about the truth, a bit of biblical instruction about true fruits.

The first one is this. In Matthew five, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ says this. “If you love...” And, by the way, good fruit is all about that. It is all about love. It is all about loving God. It is all about loving people, loving our fellow man.

Hear me. If you are thinking about yourself—and I hope all of you are thinking about yourself first in this or your children or your parents or your brother or your sister or whoever it is, a friend, and you are trying to judge whether they are a Christian or not, somebody is going to say, “Judge not, lest you be judged.”

If you say that, you really ought to study your Bible a lot more than you have. Jesus Christ said repeatedly through the New Testament, “You will know them by their fruits. You will know them by their fruits. You will know them by their fruits.”

Folks, he said that because you can know them by their fruit. If there is bad fruit, they are a bad person. If there is good fruit, it is a good person. The Bible says that. Figs don’t come from thistle bushes. It is a fact.

Now hear me. Jesus Christ said this. Even the tax gatherers who were some wretched folks in those days, loved those who loved them. Just because you love your children and your grandchildren and your mother and your father and you do good things, seemingly good things for them does not make you a Christian, a child of God. It doesn’t make you a bearer of repentance that are fit and meet and suitable for repentance. Even the tax gatherers do that.

Jesus Christ said, “What do ye more than these?”

Do you know what his point is, folks? Good fruit manifests itself by doing above and beyond what the world does. Understand that. It is nothing for you to come to me and show me your works where you love those who love you. What Scripture says is we need to love those who don’t love us. We need to love those who are strangers to us. We need to even love those who hate us.

I lay that down first.

The second thing that I would have you to understand. When you have a person, if you are trying to justify yourself or your child or your parents or somebody you dearly love, you are trying to justify their Christianity when there are no fruits in their life and you say, “Well, if you squint just right and you do all this acrobatics and you just... walk just right...”

Folks, that isn’t it. Jesus Christ said, “By many fruits you declare yourselves to be my disciples.”

If you don't believe that, folks, you go over and you read what is written in John 15 and 16. "By many fruits you reveal yourselves to be my disciples. That is what he said, not by a few dried up, shriveled up..."

Do you understand? When the fruits of God come, they come in clusters. They come in bunches. All you got... folks, some of you might be thinking about the parable of the soils. Ok. Let's go there. Some bring forth 100 fold. But, folks, some bring forth 60 and some 30. But by that you can say, "Well, see, some have a whole bunch and some have a little."

Do you know what 30 fold is? Multiplied 30 times. Even that is not small. It is just some have lots of fruit and some have a whole lot of fruit.

So you don't have to squint and look and... ok, the next thing that I want to say to you guys. Church, hear me, because not only do I want to warn you with false professions and warn you who know you are lost. I want to encourage us as a church. I think these warnings and these, this instruction from the Scriptures is meant to do both, but I want you to hear this.

Folks, the fact that you read your Bible a couple of times a week and that fact that you come to church, the fact that you are a church member. In fact, folks, hear me.

"Lord, Lord, didn't we do many mighty works? Didn't we? Weren't we there among your people when they were casting out the demons and when they were doing all this stuff? Lord, weren't we there? Didn't we speak in tongues? Didn't we do this stuff, too?"

"I never knew you."

You see, these are not the good works that are being talked about.

Folks, because you come to church once in a while and because you read your Bible once in a while, because... do you know what, folks? We have this prevalent idea today that if I don't drink and I don't smoke and I don't swear and I don't dance and I don't fornicate with my neighbor's wife, I go to church once in a while. I am a Christian. I am ok. Look at my life.

You have missed it if you think that is what it is. You have missed it. The Bible doesn't say Christ went about abstaining from evil. He did. It says he went about doing good, being out weary and abstaining from evil. That is not what it says. It says being out weary in well doing.

Do, do, do. What do you do? Not just to your loved ones?

Guys, will you come to Matthew chapter 25? Jesus Christ does not say, "Well done, good and faithful servant because you went to church once in a while."

“Well done, good and faithful servant, because you didn’t fornicate with your neighbor’s wife.”

“Well done, good and faithful servant, because you read your Bible once in a while.”

That is not what he says. He says, “You know what? I was that prostitute out on the east side of San Antonio. I was her. And I had many cold nights on the street. I was her. I was lost in my sin and nobody came to tell me. And you, you fed me. You gave me something to eat. You gave me clothes. You told me the truth.”

Folks, I am not talking to those of you who serve people at our lunches because you need to, because it is expected of you, because you know people are watching you and if you don’t do it, you are afraid of what they will think. I am not talking to you. I am talking, “Well done, good and faithful servant, because I was out there on those streets. I was naked. I was hungry. I was a stranger. And you visited me. I was in jail. You visited me.”

Do you know what the essence of true religion is? You visited the orphans and the widows in their affliction.

You know what? In Matthew 25 and in James one we have the word “visit.” You are not getting off, folks, because you have got all this wealth, all this middle class American wealth and you go home every day. You go home during the week. You hide within your four walls or within the two doors of your car and you think, “Well, I don’t know. I don’t know. I don’t know about the orphans over there. I don’t know about the widows over there. I don’t know about the people. And do you know what? I don’t know about it, so I am not responsible.”

Do you know what? It says visit and visit means you go. If I say I am going to visit you, it doesn’t mean you come to my house. It means I go find you where you are.

Christ is going to say, “I was that homeless man. I was that orphan over there in central Africa and you gave me the wherewithal to not starve. My parents died of AIDS. You sent money to Action International. You did. I was that widow up in those hills in North East India. And you gave money to James [?]. You even sent some of your people over here. I was that old man, lost in my sin and deceived into believing that Allah was all my hope and Mohammed and you came to me and you visited me. I was in jail. You came to me. Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Folks, we are talking fruit of love. We are talking bunches and clusters of fruits of love.

I love my children. So does the world. Christ is going to judge you by the very same fruits that John the Baptist is demanding in this passage. You will be judged in that day by them.

Now I want you to understand this. You don't produce these because you simply say, "I want to be saved and I am going to go do this as hard as I can."

Christ said, "Without me, you can do nothing."

Christ said this. You are his workmanship in Christ Jesus unto good works. Christ laid down his life to purchase a people who would be zealous of good works. His blood was spilled.

If you say that you are a Christian and you do not bear fruit, do you know what? You cast a great insult upon the blood of Jesus Christ who said that he gave his life's blood to purchase a people zealous of good works. You say you are Christian but you don't have good works, do you know what? I will tell you the same thing that John said. Shut your mouth. Don't begin to say...

If you want to justify your son or your daughter or your mother or your father or your brother or your sister or yourself or any other person and say that they are Christian even though you full well know that they did not bring forth a consistent pattern of bunches and clusters of this kind of loving fruit where they love strangers and they love their enemies and they reached out and they have searched out people, if they were selfish and self serving in their life and you are trying to justify yourself or somebody else, I would say the same thing. Shut your mouth. Let your life, let their life dictate what they are by consistent life of fruit and brother and sisters, you that have been bought by the blood of Christ, let us hearken to this. The Judgment Day is coming. Christ is keeping an account. Let your good works flow.

All folks, visit the stranger. Visit, visit, visit. Don't say, "Brother Charles is the only one that can visit people in jail."

He is not.

You could go there as well.

Don't say that you have got to be a pastor in order to visit people in other countries. You don't. We will put together our money and buy nice furniture and have nice lawns and all this other stuff. But do you know what? God isn't going to say in that day, "Well done, good and faithful servant," because you had a nice manicured lawn or your car was kept nice wax all the time. You put together your money. You put together your prayers. You put together your fasting. You put together your efforts, your blood, your sweat and your tears and pull yourself out for other people.

Jesus Christ went about doing good and he looks at you and he says, "If you will be my disciple, you must pick up your cross. You must deny yourself and you must follow me."

And if you are going to follow him, folks, he did good. He did good all the time, all the time, thinking of people, thinking of people, doing good to people.

Whatever you have been taught true Christianity is, if it doesn't measure up to this, then, you know what? Throw it out the window. It is no good. When God calls upon you to repent of your sins he is calling you to repent of a fruitless, useless life, self serving, self centered life and to give yourself.

You guys, John said if you don't love your brother, you don't love God.

People want to say, "I love God. I love God. I love God."

John says if you don't love man, you don't love God. Whatever kind of religion you may think you have, you can measure it right there. How much do I pour myself out for others?

And do you know what? If you look at your life right now and you say, "I have fallen short. I see it is not there," Jesus Christ did not say, "Do this in your own strength." He said, "Without me you can do nothing, but if you abide in him you bear much fruit."

You lay a hold upon him, call upon him, confess your selfish, self centered life. Ask him to help you to do this. This life I am calling you to, folks, is impossible aside from the power of God. Jesus Christ laid down his life to purchase a people and to make a people zealous of good works. That blood is powerful. He is in the habit of taking selfish people and making them lovers of men.

God help us to be that. Help us, Father, help us. Lord, it couldn't be plainer. If we don't measure up I don't want people to run away all discouraged and distraught and feeling that there is just no hope. Lord, if we don't measure up, I pray that you would work repentance that there might be true fruit. Lord Jesus, work in our hearts so that we might be more like you.

Lord, we are sorry. Those true children of yours in this place, we are sorry, Lord, that we have not done more. We admit that we get sucked away. The world is enchanting. It has a certain sweet song that it plays in our ears and we can find ourselves to become mesmerized by it at times. We pray in your faithfulness to our souls, keep us on track. Keep us alert. Keep us watchful. Keep us fruitful, Lord. In Christ's precious name we pray that it would be so to the testimony of his blood and his life and his workmanship in our lives. Amen.

You are dismissed.