

A TREE IS KNOWN BY ITS FRUIT

Fruit very consistently tells a very accurate story. Fruit doesn't lie. That is true in reference to good fruit, and it is true in reference to bad fruit. The kind of tree it is - is seen consistently in the kind of fruit that is brought forth. Jesus said:

Matthew 12:33 (NKJV)

33 “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.

This is a truism repeatedly stated by Christ here in Matt. 12:33-35, and also stated repeatedly in Matt. 7:16-20. How simple and yet profound. “*The nature of the tree determines its fruit.*”

I have learned (sometimes the hard way) that when it comes to people (metaphorically), you can't tell exactly what kind of fruit a tree will bring forth just by looking at the tree. You have to wait a little while to see the fruit, and that takes a little time. But in the end, the telling is in the kind of fruit brought forth.

The NATURE of the tree determines the NATURE of its fruit! This truism is very consistent and hence is repeatedly stated by the Lord as a principle of discernment.

The good tree bringing forth good fruit is represented in this context by the Lord Himself and His good fruit ministry. The bad tree bringing forth bad fruit is represented by the Pharisees and their bad fruit ministry, as seen in their blasphemy of the Spirit.

Everything about Christ's first coming ministry was benevolent, kind, and good. He didn't harm anyone. He only did GOOD, and He did it in regard to EVERYONE. He healed everyone. He offered the truth to everyone. That is in keeping with how the OT prophets said the Messiah would come (the first time).

The Scripture says, “***grace and truth came through Jesus Christ***” (Jn. 1:17). John 3:17 says, “***God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.***”

The Messiah came preaching good tidings, healing the brokenhearted, proclaiming liberty, and setting the captives free. This is all GOOD stuff which is characteristic of God-like goodness indicative of what the prophets indicated would characterize the true Messiah's ministry (cf. Isa. 61:1).

In contrast, the devil is all about destroying people's lives. He never actually helps people. He deceives people. He harms people. He kills people. Jesus said the devil “**was a murderer from the beginning**” and that he is “**a liar and the father of it.**” (Jn. 8:44).

The nature of Christ's ministry was so CLEARLY of the good God of the Bible as to be incontrovertible. The Spirit's testifying that it was God-ordained was so very obvious that only the slanderously evil could possibly attribute it to the devil. And the reason their sin was so evil is that they actually knew better. In their evilness, they just did not want to accept it!

And evil does that. It perverts or twists the truth, where evil is said to be good and good is said to be evil. That is devil-like.

Isaiah 5:20 (NKJV)

20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Christ calls it like it is! His ministry was clearly good through and through, indicative of being rooted in God, but in contrast, the bad fruit of the Pharisees totally exposed them. Jesus said to them...

Matthew 12:34 (NKJV)

34 Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

A **brood** is a “family” and vipers are snakes – poisonous snakes. Deadly dangerous snakes full of venomous poison. Christ called these religious leaders a family of poisonous snakes (cf. Mt. 3:7; 23:33). They work in concert like a brood. And they are deceptive in that sometimes it's hard to see their true colors until they strike.

Christ here connected the fruit of a person's life to what comes out of their mouth. And consistent with the truism in verse 33 He asks, “**How can you being evil, speak good things?**” They couldn't because they were evil.

The word “evil” (Gk. *poneros*) denotes that which is morally bad. Satan is called “**the evil one**” (1 Jn. 5:18). Their nature was evil and therefore they could not speak good things that were right and true. What was needed was a changed heart! They fundamentally had a HEART problem. That is always the problem!

And then Jesus gave forth another truism: “***Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.***” The mouth tells on the heart. “Out of the abundance” refers to the overflow of the heart. It’s like the heart is a reservoir in which words are stored up, and as the reservoir gets full, what flows out of the mouth is indicative of what is in the heart.

In the Scriptures, the idea of the heart relates to the core of a person, involving the thoughts, intentions, and will of a person, which is in contrast to merely the emotions. Thus, the HEART of the person really represents the character of a person. Therefore, words that come out of the heart reveal the nature or character of the person. Fruit tells - words tell! Words tell on a person because they are the overflow of the heart.

Listen to what a person talks about, and you will soon discover the condition of their heart. People who talk incessantly about themselves are all about self – no matter what they say. People who talk about God are God-focused. People who are bitter speak constantly in bitter tones. Our speech consistently tells on the state of our heart.

The mouth tells, but the origin of what it tells comes forth from the HEART. It starts in the heart and moves to the mouth from there.

Matthew 15:18–19 (NKJV)

18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man.

19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.

Life is about the HEART and what goes on in the heart comes out in the life – what goes on in the heart comes out of the mouth (cf. Isa. 32:6).

Proverbs 4:23 (NKJV)

23 Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.