

Beware False Preachers

by Anton Bosch

This sermon emphasizes the importance of discerning true from false teachers by examining their authority, training, commendation, and fruit. It highlights the need to ask crucial questions like who authorized them, who trained them, and what fruit is evident in their lives. The message warns against false prophets who may appear as sheep but are actually wolves, urging listeners to test the spirits and judge based on genuine fruit rather than popularity or outward appearances.

Scripture: Luke 20:1, Matthew 7:15, Acts 18:27, 1 Corinthians 16:3, 2 Corinthians 3:1, Matthew 7:16, 1 John 4:1

Topics: "Discernment", "False Teachers"

Description

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Transcript

All right, so we're in Luke chapter 20 and I'm going to read verses 1 through 8. Luke chapter 20 verses 1 through 8. Now it happened on one of those days that as he taught the people in the temple and preached the gospel, that the chief priests and the scribes together with the elders confronted him and spoke to him saying, tell us by what authority are you doing these things? Or who is he who gave you this authority? But he answered and said to them, I will also ask you one thing and answer me. The baptism of John, was it from heaven or from men? And they reasoned among themselves saying, if we say from heaven, he will say, why then did you not believe him? But if we say from men, all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet. And so they answered that they did not know where it was from.

And Jesus said to them, neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things. Now we're going to do things a little different this morning. I'm going to go through these eight verses pretty quickly, and then I want to speak on something that comes out of that, so it'll be just a little different to the way we normally do things.

And so it happened on one of those days, these are the seven days between the triumphal entry and the crucifixion. Jesus is being examined, he is in the public arena, being seen in the temple every day teaching and preaching, and the Pharisees and the scribes are examining him and testing him. And so as

he taught the people in the temple and preached the gospel, that the chief priests and the scribes together with the elders confronted him.

So these are the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin, we introduced this last week, was made up of 71 men, 70 were made up of elders, scribes, and Pharisees and Sadducees, the different political parties. And then the chief priests, well there was only supposed to be one chief priest, but in fact at this time there were two, and that's a long story.

One was the incumbent and one was retired, but still pulling the strings. And so there were actually two chief priests, but the Sanhedrin was made up of 70 of these men plus the chief priest, who would have the casting vote in the case of a draw. And so they spoke to him saying, tell us, by what authority are you doing these things? Or who is he who gave you this authority? Now this is the heart of the passage, and this is what we want to focus on this morning.

The question is a good question. There's nothing wrong with a question. The question is, who gave you authority to do and to say what you do and what you say? The problem was with what they perceived the answer to be.

The problem was not with a question, and it's right for us to ask that question, and that's what I want to spend most of this morning's time on. We must ask the question, by whose authority, who has authorized you to speak? That's a good question, and obviously we know the answer. The answer is God had authorized Jesus.

God had sent him, God had affirmed, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased, hear he him. And so God had publicly declared his support and the commission that the Lord Jesus had. God had also affirmed his position by signs and wonders, by miracles.

And so there was no question, and obviously the people got the answer. They knew who the answer was, or what the answer was. The learned people didn't understand what the answer was, partly because they didn't want to know.

Not because they could not know, but because they did not want to know. Because if they acknowledged Jesus as being the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One, then they would have to obey him, and that's where we have the problem. The moment we acknowledge that the speaker is from God, then we must obey the words.

And they did not want to obey the Lord Jesus. And so the answer they were looking for was the wrong answer, and they were not going to get that. And obviously there's a trick in the question, because if Jesus said, God has sent me, if he said that straight out, which he had clearly intimated in many, many ways, and we've highlighted those as we've gone through, they would have reason to stone him, because this would be blasphemy.

He was now then making himself equal with God. If he said, I have no authority, well, then they would kick him out, and say, well, you know, you're an imposter. Now remember also that they were not really asking whether God had authorized Jesus or not.

They were saying, where's your license? Your license to preach. Only one body had the power or the authority to issue a license to preach, and that was them. And if you did not go through them, and they did not commission you, and they did not ordain you, to use a modern term, then you could not speak.

And Jesus clearly was not ordained by them, because he didn't need their ordination. He was ordained, and he was commissioned by the Father. And so this was really the question.

They're saying to him, where's your papers? And Jesus basically says, I don't have papers, I don't need papers. God has sent me, and God has affirmed that he has sent me by the miracles and the signs that has followed. Now verse 3, But he answered and said to them, I also will ask you one thing, and answer me.

So they put a trick question to Jesus. Jesus answers with an equally trick question. And the question is about John.

The baptism of John, Jesus says, was it from heaven or from men? And I'm not going to comment, because it's very clear. They reasoned among themselves, saying, if we say from heaven, he will say, why did you not believe him? Remember that John preached repentance and baptism, and the common people believed him and were baptized and repented. But the scribes, the Pharisees, the religious establishment, they did not believe him, and they did not repent, and they were not baptized.

And so if we say from heaven, he will say, why then did you not believe him? If we say from men, all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet. So again, you can see that the people can see what the religious leaders cannot see. And this is a theme we've seen in the last couple of chapters.

Remember, the blind man sees what the Pharisees cannot see. Jesus, son of David. And so here again, the same thing.

These people who were not ignorant, because they were taught the scriptures, and they knew the scriptures, but they were not academics, they were not spiritual leaders, and yet they understood by the Spirit, if by no other means, that John was a prophet, that John had been sent of God. And they also had recognized who Jesus was. Now verse 7, so they answered that they did not know where it was from.

So they take the easy way out. And Jesus' response is, well, then I'm not going to tell you either. And so Jesus said to them, neither will I tell you what authority I do these things.

And that was the end of that. Now Jesus goes on to tell a parable of the vineyard that was rented out, and we're going to see that this plays into that. The question we must ask, and as I said, it is a good question, who authorized you? The problem is that today we have thousands of preachers running around in churches, but particularly on the Internet.

And we must ask the question, where do you get your authority from? Now I think that may come as a shock to hear from me and say, well, why must we ask that question? Because it's an important question. And it's a question that must be answered before you're going to listen to someone because of the number of false teachers and false prophets and false apostles. They've always been there.

Paul warned in 2 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 11, 13, for such are false apostles. Now I don't want to get into the background too much, but Paul had established the church of Corinth. He was their apostle.

Other guys came from Jerusalem. They had letters of commendation. We're going to speak about those in a moment.

They had letters from the elders. Now this is separate from the Sanhedrin. This is now in the context of the church.

And so the church in Jerusalem had given these guys, well, we don't even know whether they had given them letters to say, these men are trustworthy and you must receive them, or whether they had faked the letters. We don't know. What we do know is they were fake apostles.

They were not the real deal. I would assume that they had faked the letters. And so they come to Corinth and they say, you see, here's our letters.

That gives us authority. And we're basically taking over this church. Paul is a heretic.

Don't listen to Paul. You must listen to us. That is one of the big issues in 1 Corinthians.

And then also in 2 Corinthians, together with the sin issues that they were dealing with. And Paul defends his apostleship. And we're going to see a little bit more about that in a moment.

But he says, guys like these are false apostles. The word apostle sent one. So they're saying they were sent when in fact they were not sent.

They are deceitful workers. So they deceive people into believing that they are the real deal when they are not. They transform themselves into apostles of Christ.

They have not been made apostles by Christ. They have not been sent by him. They have not been sent by the church.

But they have made themselves. They transform themselves into apostles of Christ. Presenting themselves as something they are not.

And no wonder. For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Very important.

So the devil presents himself as a messenger from God. Remember the word angel, messenger. And he comes to Adam and Eve.

And he presents himself, maybe not as a messenger from God, but as a messenger of the truth. You need to understand God has an agenda. And that's why he doesn't want you to eat.

But you really need to eat. And so he presents himself or transforms himself into an angel of light. So if he does that, Paul concludes, therefore it is no great thing.

If his ministers also, his servants, ministers' servants, also transform themselves into ministers or servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works. So he's saying there are those who are servants stroke ministers, who present themselves as ministers of righteousness. But in fact, they are not.

They are messengers of Satan. Now just think about that. What is Paul saying? He's saying those days, and it's more true today, there were people who were preaching, and saying we're preaching the word of God, we're preaching the gospel, but in fact they were sent by the devil.

And they exist today. More than we can begin to imagine. And so it is important then for us to ask the question, where do you come from? Who sent you? So the question they asked Jesus was the right question.

And we must ask that question before we receive someone into our homes and into our minds and hearts. Before you click on the link on the on the internet, you listen to a sermon that you don't even know who the guy is. Because he can and focus the problem.

The chances are that he is more likely a messenger of Satan these days. Because there's not a lot of truth on the internet anymore. And I'm talking about Christian websites and Christian churches.

There's not a lot of truth anymore. And so his messengers transform themselves into ministers of righteousness. But in fact they are sent by the devil.

Now I know folk would listen to this and say well, you know, we've heard you speak about this before. And of course you've heard me speak about this before, because we've talked through the whole of the New Testament in these last 18 years. And you know I did a check on Friday that every book in the New Testament, all the Gospels, Acts, for all Paul's letters, all the other epistles, including Revelation, with the exception of one book, which is the book of Philemon, a one-page letter.

Every single book contains multiple warnings against false preachers. Every book in the Bible. And so as we've gone through these books in these last 18 years, we've been confronted by this truth.

And yet we say, well, you know, it's out there. It doesn't affect us. It does affect us.

Because friends and family are constantly sending us links and saying, you've got to listen to this preacher. Sometimes we're just bored and we just look and we're surfing the internet and we're looking to see, well, what can we watch? Or we're surfing the television. I've forgotten about that.

We only have over-the-air antenna. And I haven't counted, but we probably have 20 Christian channels on there. And not one of them is safe.

Not one of them is safe. And yet Christians will flip and press the clicker and, let me have a listen to what this guy has to say. No, first ask the question.

Who sent you? By what authority do you speak? And by what authority can you speak into my life? That I should give you the 45 minutes or the 30 minutes or whatever it's going to take to listen to his sermon. So what I've done this morning is I'm going to look at a few key areas, questions we must ask. This is a major study.

We can spend weeks and weeks and weeks on this. I don't want to interrupt our study of the Gospel of Luke to do this. And yet I believe it's pertinent to the passage that we have looked at this morning.

So the first question we must ask is, is this person gifted? Now, I struggled with the order. And the order may not be from the most important to the less important. I think these things are all important.

So ignore the order a little bit. But the first question is, is this person gifted by God? Is he gifted by God? Ephesians chapter 4 verse 11, And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. Who authorized these men? Jesus Christ.

He himself. And this is not talking about the twelve. This is after the ascension.

The context of Ephesians chapter 4, When he ascended on high, he gave these gifts. This is after the twelve. And so, he gave.

And he gave some. You see, we get this idea today that everybody is a teacher. Everybody is a prophet.

Everybody is an apostle. No, there are some that he has given. And he gives them.

So when he himself gave, and he himself gave some to be apostles. We must ask the same question the Pharisees asked. Who sent you? Did God authorize this man? Now, the point I'm trying to make is that many guys have got into the ministry because it's a good business.

It's not good business for me and for those who speak the truth, but it is good business for others. You make good money and an easy life. And it's not an easy life for those who, again, who want to be true to the Lord and true to his word.

It's hard. But for those who are false, it's an easy way to make a living. It's an easy way to get rich.

It's an easy way to have influence and to have people that you can manipulate and control. And so there are many men in the pulpits. There are many men on the Internet and women who have learned to do the job.

They are motivational speakers. That's all they are. They are not called by God.

They are not gifted by God. And if you had some modicum of discernment, you would listen to them and say, But this is not a godly gift. This is not God speaking through this man.

This is just a man. And he is speaking stuff that he has learned to say. I mean, anyone can learn to be a politician if you are willing to make enough sacrifices of your integrity.

And anyone can learn to be a motivational speaker. And anyone can learn to be a preacher. There are schools that you can go to, to learn to be a preacher.

But it doesn't make you a preacher. It doesn't make you an apostle or a prophet or an evangelist, whatever you want to call them. It doesn't make you a messenger of God.

Only those that God has gifted and sent are gifted of God. And we must ask that question. Has God sent this man? Now, I know that's an objective question.

I know it's a difficult question to answer. But if you are led by the Spirit, you must be able to at least have some sense within your spirit that this is a godly man or this is not a godly man. The question is not whether you like what he has to say.

You see, that's the problem. Is that people go about whether they like what the guy has to say. And if I was up here every Sunday morning and I said, Well, you're all great, wonderful people and God has a wonderful plan for your life and you can continue in your sin and you can continue in lukewarmness and, you know, everything is great.

You've got to just discover your potential. Just figure out your destiny. And God's destiny for you is to become great in this world.

We'll pack this place out. Because that's what people want to hear. But that's not the truth.

So it's not whether he's saying what you want him to hear. It's whether what he is saying is the truth. And whether it is backed by the Word of God.

So is he gifted? Another scripture which we're not going to go through, 1 Corinthians 12, 28, says exactly the same thing. God has appointed these in the church. God appoints them.

Whose authority do they have? The authority of God. Now the second question is, Who trained you? Who trained you? Now in Pentecostal circles, in charismatic circles, the first question has always trumped the second. What I mean by that is, is there's been this idea, well, if God has gifted you, well then you don't need to be trained.

But that's not true. And it's not biblical. Now when we talk about training, I'm not necessarily speaking about seminaries or Bible college.

Because the pattern in the New Testament, they did not have seminaries and Bible colleges in the New Testament. But men were trained by other gifted teachers. But you need to be trained.

You need to be taught. Because that's God's principle. And so 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 2. The things that you have heard from me, that's Paul speaking to Timothy, among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

There is the biblical principle. Paul taught Timothy, and he says, you now go and teach others who are able to teach others. And so the truth is passed from one generation to the other.

Not necessarily in the context of family, but in the context of the church. We don't have to figure things out for ourselves. We have the benefit of 2,000 years of good men of God.

Yes, there's been a lot of error, a lot of heresy, and all sorts of nonsense going on in the past 2,000 years. But the truth has always been there. The true church has always been there.

The true men of God have always been there. And to discard the benefit of learning from them is foolish. And so we stand on the shoulders of those men.

We must be trained. But the question is not, have you been trained? Well, that's the first question. But the second question equal to that is, who trained you? If you were trained by another false teacher, well, your training is obviously worthless.

Even in the secular world, people say, well, you know, I have a master's degree. And often people who are probing will say, where did you get your master's degree? Did you get it from some Mickey Mouse institution? Oh no, mine is from Berkeley, or from Yale, or from Harvard. Well, that's different to one from a university in the backwoods somewhere.

And I'm not saying small universities don't do good training. But we have to ask the question, what comes out of those schools? So the fact that someone has degrees doesn't mean anything. Where did he get those degrees from? The fact that someone has been trained means nothing.

Who trained him? Who taught him? Now, I do believe that it's God's plan and God's pattern for men to be trained in the local church. And so if you've been under the teaching of a sound Bible teacher, you should be able to teach on the basis of what you've been taught. The problem is that teachers can teach, but learners don't learn.

So it's no good saying, well, you know, I was in the church, I was ten years, I was with that great Bible teacher. It means nothing. If you didn't learn anything because you were not teachable, you were not

willing to learn, well, the ten years is wasted.

I've come across a few people who run around, they say, I know one preacher who says, you know, I studied science at a university in New York. He's well known for half-truths. What's wrong with that statement? He doesn't say, I earned a degree.

He says, I studied. Now, that can mean that he went there for one week. But I went there.

So why is it important then if you say that he's been to a university that he has papers? Because it proves that he has made the grade. You see, in the same way to say, well, you know, I was in that good Bible teaching church for X number of years. That doesn't prove anything.

Does the teacher or does the church approve and say, he made the grade? He has learned. And he is now able to pass that on to others. Now, folks, I do believe that God is still raising up men in his church.

I believe he's still raising up preachers. But the problem is that many go when they've not been sent. And there are others who have been called but refuse to learn and therefore become disqualified.

And so in Philippians chapter 2 verse 20, Paul speaks about Timothy and he says, I have no one who is like-minded who will sincerely care for your state. Now, I want you to have a look that he's speaking here particularly about character more than theology. While theology is absolutely important, character is equally important.

For I have no one like-minded who will sincerely care for you. No one who sees it the way I do, feels like I do. For all seek their own.

Way back then already, 2,000 years. What's he saying? He says the preachers are in it for themselves. 2,000 years ago it was that way and it's that way today.

They seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But here's Timothy's qualifications. But you know his proven character.

So that's another aspect. You know him. You know his character.

That as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. Now if we put this in modern language, Timothy served his apprenticeship with the great apostle Paul. That's really what Paul is saying.

He wasn't raised by some false prophet. He was trained by Paul, the apostle. And so we need to ask the question, Who trained you? Folks, here's the thing.

People are getting on the internet today and they're getting into churches. They have never ever sat under biblical ministry themselves. You say, no, that's impossible.

No, it's not impossible. I don't think there are any builders here this morning so I can speak and I trust those on the internet will forgive me. But in South Africa we have a saying, we said to become a builder is the easiest thing in the world.

All you need is a trowel, a shovel, and a truck and you can become a builder. Folks, to become a preacher is one of the easiest things you can do in the world. You just need an internet connection and a phone.

You don't even need a Bible. And you say, no, that's impossible. It's not impossible, it's true.

I see people all the time and I don't go looking for them, people send them, people say, you know, this guy's great, you need to watch him. And I watch this guy sitting in his living room and he doesn't have a clue what he's talking about. He doesn't know the first thing about the Bible.

He doesn't even quote the Bible. He may quote a verse out of context. He has no training whatsoever.

And yet he has a following. And some of these guys, folks, when you look at their, what do you call it when people watch them? Views. Some of them have thousands and thousands of views.

Somebody sent me a link the other day to one of these false teachers. Within 20 minutes of him going live, he had 15,000 views. And he's an ignoramus.

He has no clue what he's talking about. But within a few minutes he has 15,000 people watching him. And all his videos go to 20, 30, 40,000.

Another guy in Texas stands next to his microphone, has no spiritual qualifications, he's never been trained, he has no clue what he's talking about, but he has thousands and thousands and thousands of followers. And I'm not talking about thousands, I'm talking tens of thousands of followers. People are easily deceived.

Who trained him? Some preachers have brick-and-mortar churches, and they have never been trained. In fact, many of them will boast and say, Nobody ever trained me. Shame on you.

And yet people will flock to those churches. There's one church an hour from here, and people will drive three hours every Sunday to go to that church. And the preacher stands up from time to time, and he says, Look how great I am.

Nobody ever trained me. God help us, folk. We need to wise up.

We need to wake up. We need to be careful who we listen to. We need to be careful who we send money to.

Who trained you? And, of course, they asked the question of the disciples. Remember, they said, You're ignorant. In other words, you didn't get any training.

And then they said, But we noticed that you've been with Jesus. Now, folk, that is not an excuse for us. Jesus, Paul, and the twelve were unique.

They had no one to go before them. They were the first. Therefore, God spoke to them directly.

So they were all trained by God or by Jesus. That time has passed. To claim and say, Well, Peter was an ignorant fisherman, and yet he became an apostle.

Therefore, I can be ignorant. And, folk, some of these guys can't even use their own mother language. They can't even read or write English properly.

And yet they set themselves up as preachers. Because Peter was a fisherman. He wasn't educated.

You cannot use Peter as an example. Because Peter walked with Jesus. And I know the way they get out of this.

They say, Well, you know, I met with Jesus. I was praying out there in the desert. And Jesus appeared to me.

Rubbish. Jesus appeared to you. You'd be a different man.

There is no one on the face of the earth today. In fact, this is simple. There is no one on the face of the earth today who has received firsthand from God or from Jesus the way that Paul and Peter did.

No one. And if you did not receive it by training from someone. And I'm not saying that every word needs to be passed on.

But there are principles that we need to be taught. There are character issues that need to be addressed. Interpreting the scripture is not that easy sometimes.

And if you're not being educated or trained. And I'm not saying going to school. But being trained by a Bible teacher.

You will make a mess of it. All right. The next question.

Who commended you? So that was the exact question they were asking Jesus. Who authorized you? And we say, well, you know. I don't need to be authorized.

I don't need papers. I don't need credentials. I have a gift.

But did you know that in the New Testament they carried papers? I know many. Particularly charismatic Christians will say that's nonsense. They carry papers.

No, they had a gift. No, they carry papers. Now remember, I've said that papers do not make you a man of God.

But you need to have papers. Not necessarily a degree. But what the Bible calls letters of commendation.

Letters of commendation. Now let's have a look at that. Acts chapter 18.

This is Apollos. And when he, Apollos, desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him. And when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace.

Simple. Apollos doesn't just go across and say, here I am. I'm Apollos.

I'm a good speaker. And Apollos was a good speaker. Now you better listen to what I have to say.

No, Apollos arrives at that church and he says, the brethren sent this letter. And the letter says, you can trust me. We invite preachers into our homes through the television and internet without any commendation.

Oh, but my friend sent the link to me. Well, who is your friend? What is their standing? There are certain brethren, when they send me a link, I trust it and I watch it. Because I trust them.

There are others when they send me a link, I don't even bother. Because I know where they're at. But when Apollos traveled, he had letters to say this man.

You see, they'd established a principle. And that was that you can't just receive a traveling preacher on face value. Because already at that time there were false preachers going around and saying, you know, I'm from Jerusalem.

I'm from the church there. And they drop a few names. I know Peter and John and James.

In fact, I was there when Jesus was crucified. But they're false preachers. In 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 16, verse 3. Now, Paul is again defending himself against.

Sorry, I've jumped the gun. This is in the context of collecting money to go to Jerusalem for the poor believers. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters, I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem.

Now, remember, writing letters those days was not that easy. The parchment or the vellum that they wrote on was very expensive. You invariably had to find a scribe who would write the letter for you.

So it was costly. It was expensive. So if this needed to be done, there was good reason for it to be done.

And so Paul is now dealing with the issue of money. And he is saying those who will be entrusted with the money must have letters. Approving them to deal with the money.

Folks, there are ministries that handle millions, billions of dollars. And yet those who handle the money, those who are trustees or whatever, or treasurers of those organizations, have no letters approving that they are trustworthy. In fact, the world does a better job of this than the church does.

Because there are websites you can go to on the world if you want to give money to XYZ charity, you can go to certain websites on the Internet and they will rate that charity and say, these guys use the money for the purpose they said they use it for. So much goes to administration. So much goes to the actual cause.

Or don't trust these guys because it all goes to administration. In other words, those who run the scheme take the money. And yet churches don't have that.

But we must ask those questions. If you're going to send money to a ministry, if you're going to give money to this church, you better know what's being done with it. And whether those who are handling the money are trustworthy.

Now, in 2 Corinthians, remember I said there were these false apostles. They had these letters in the church of Corinth. Now Paul is turning the thing the other way around, but we still see the same principle.

So he says, do we begin again to commend ourselves? Now, these guys were telling everybody how great they were. Paul wasn't doing that. And he says, now you're forcing me to speak of myself, to boast.

But, you know, what else must I do? I'm trying to defend you. Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? So this is the third scripture where we see exactly the same principle, the idea of letters of commendation. Now, you say, well, Paul is saying, I don't need that.

Yes, Paul is saying, I don't need that. But why is he saying he doesn't need that in this case, in the case of the Corinthians? Because of the context. You are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read by all men.

Clearly, you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. So what's Paul saying? He's saying, as far as this church is concerned, the church of Corinth, I don't need letters because you got saved as a result of my ministry. What you have and who you are in Christ is because of my ministry to you.

So you know me. That's basically what Paul is saying. You know me.

I don't need these letters. But we see this principle. Who sent you? Who authorized you? We must ask that question.

And then the last one I'm going to deal with is fruit. We've spoken about this passage a number of times, Matthew 7, verse 15. Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

I think the picture is clear and it's graphic. These men come presenting themselves, dressed up like sheep, but in fact they're actually wolves. They're false prophets.

In fact, I saw a meme this last week, I think it was, and I think it was a little funny, but it was really more sad than funny. And it basically said that false prophets don't need to dress up like sheep anymore because the shepherds have given them access to the sheep. The shepherds have given them access to the sheep, so they don't even need to fool them anymore because the shepherds are not doing what I'm doing this morning and saying, be careful.

In fact, what the shepherds are doing is they're bringing these men in, they're giving them the pulpit and saying, come and speak. But they're false. You will know them by their fruits.

So is he gifted? Has he been trained? Has he letters of commendation? And it doesn't have to be a physical letter. Obviously, today we have internet and we have phone and we can call and say, well, who's this guy? Oh, no, he's a good guy and you can trust him. We don't need a formal letter as such, but we need a commendation.

In fact, after I've gone, don't let anyone speak in this pulpit unless you know where he comes from. Unless where he comes from you have a letter of commendation or you've called at least and said, well, who is this guy? But we don't want to offend anyone, so brother, come and speak. You will know them by their fruits.

Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Simple. Even so, every good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit. Now let me remind you, the fruit here is not the fruit of his ministry.

What I mean by that is that the false preachers will say, look at the number of views I get on YouTube. Why, when you have 30,000 subscribers to your YouTube channel, is it easy to grow from 30,000 to 40,000 overnight? Oh, because 30,000 other people trust him, he's going to be good. These preachers, and I've heard them say, I have 30,000 subscribers, I have so many views, I have so many likes on my posts, that proves that I'm good.

No, it proves nothing. What you've been able to do in the ministry, the size of the guy's church, the number of converts he has, the number of likes or clicks or whatever else he has, proves absolutely nothing. In

fact, on the contrary, the more popular he is, the more likely he is to be fake.

Listen to me. There may be megachurches that are good, I have not come across them. Because by definition, in order to become a megachurch, you must compromise.

You must compromise on morals, you must compromise on the word of God. You cannot become big in the ministry business today, without compromising the truth. And we see this in the ministry of Jesus.

They were following him, and we'll see in the next few weeks, suddenly they all turn against him. When he starts speaking the cross. So the fruit is not the results of his ministry, the fruit is the results of his life.

Love, joy, peace, goodness, kindness, gentleness. The fruit is evident in his family life. An elder is to be blameless.

And when an elder's kids are brats, he cannot be an elder. Simple, plain. I'm not talking about kids that grow up and go wayward.

I'm talking about kids in the home. Where is the fruit? Where is the fruit? And I know, and I've said this before, I know people say, well, there's this guy, he's such a big name, and there's so many people following him, and even if I write to him, he's not going to respond to me. So how do I know? Well, if you don't know, then don't trust him.

It's simple. You say, oh, but I'm going to lose out on some good ministry. No, you're not.

If you're being faithful to the Lord Jesus, he will provide for you the teaching and the ministry that you need. You don't have to go looking for it, especially not in shady places. And if there is no testimony as to the man's life, how does he conduct himself? How is his relationship with his wife? How does he deal with money? Is he discontent? Is he greedy? Does he have a roving eye? For these are things we excuse and we say it's no problem.

Brethren want to be in ministry, but they can't keep their eyes to themselves. We can go on and on and on, I'm out of time. Where is the fruit? The only way you can know the tree is by its fruit.

I've told you about the citrus tree we have in the yard. After all these years, I still don't know what it is. Because sometimes it looks like lemons, and sometimes it's like oranges, and sometimes it's like, I don't know what.

All I know is the tree cannot be trusted. Because if it was an orange tree, it would give me oranges every year. In fact, it's easy to fake fruit.

We've spoken about that before. I'm talking about real, genuine fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit.

Nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Judgment is coming.

Therefore, by their fruits, you will know them. By their fruits, you will know them. Not by their publicity campaign.

Not by their Facebook or their YouTube channel. By their fruits, you will know them. Let me close with 1 John chapter 4, verse 1. Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God.

Who authorized you? Because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2,000 years ago, John said that. Today, this is more true than ever.

Father, we pray that you'd help us to be discerning. Help us, Lord, to be able to recognize the true from the fake. And Lord, we pray that we may not be like the Pharisees who did ask the right question, but didn't like the answer.

And Lord, sometimes we discard the true men of God, because we don't like what they have to say. We don't like their message, because it doesn't affirm our sin and our immorality and our false doctrine. And so, Lord, we pray that you'd help us to be good jurors, good judges.

Lord, to recognize those who are of the truth and to obey your word. And Lord, to reject those who are not of the truth, that we might be saved. And so, Lord, I pray that you'd help us to test the spirits.

Help us, Lord, to test the fruit. Help us to be wise. Help us to be careful.

Lord, that we might be able to not just protect and guard our own hearts and minds, but, Lord, the hearts and minds of those around us and those that we have influence with or in. Because if we buy into error, or if we buy into some false idea, Lord, it will spread to those around us. A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

And so, Lord, we pray that you'd help us to understand. We thank you for the Lord Jesus who came and indeed was sent by God. Lord, that we need to hear him and listen to him and listen to his word.

And so, Lord, as we come to your table now, we pray that you would help us to focus on the real one who came. Many false prophets and false teachers and false Christs have come. Many are coming even now and saying, here's the Christ, there's the Christ.

But, Lord, we thank you that the Lord Jesus proved that he was the real one by dying for us. These false teachers, Lord, will not die for us. They will get us to die for them.

But, Lord, we pray that we may appreciate and recognize the depth of the sacrifice that Jesus made as he, the true shepherd, laid down his life for the sheep. We ask this in Jesus' name. For those, Lord, who believe us now, we pray that you'd go with them and bless them as they go, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/B2Prkr7HcFs.mp4>

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