

Change the Tree, Not the Fruit

by Anton Bosch

This sermon delves into Luke 6:43-45, emphasizing the importance of judging rightly and examining the fruit in our own lives. It highlights the need for genuine repentance and the significance of what we store in our hearts, as it determines what we produce. The message underscores the necessity of being born again, changing the tree of our hearts, and filling our minds with the Word of God to bear good fruit and be a source of blessing to others.

Scripture: Luke 6:37, Luke 6:43, Matthew 7:16, Romans 12:2, Proverbs 4:23, Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 4:22, Colossians 3:16, Psalm 1:1, John 15:4

Topics: "Judging Righteously", "Bearing Good Fruit"

Description

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Transcript

Bible with you, please turn with me to Luke chapter 6. Luke chapter 6, as we continue our study in Luke, and we're this morning in Luke 6, 43 through 45, but I'll read from 37 through 45. So Luke chapter 6, reading from verse 37. Judge not, and you shall not be judged.

Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you.

Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you. And he spoke a parable to them.

Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye, when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye? Hypocrite, first remove the plank from your own eye, then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye. For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit.

For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil.

For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. So the whole passage is dealing with this issue of judging, and we see all in verse 37, judge and you will not be judged, but then at the same time he's telling us that we ought to judge. But how we judge is the issue.

If we are hypocritical, if we are judging other people for the same things that we are guilty of, or that we may even be more guilty of, then obviously that's not a good thing. Now in verse 43 to 45, he now deals with the tree and the fruit, and we've spoken a lot about this in this last year, and remember that the parallel passage is in Matthew chapter 7, and there is a difference between Matthew 7 and Luke 6 on this particular passage. And obviously Matthew is more complete, it gives a bit more detail, whereas Luke gives us less detail.

That's not the difference. The big difference is that Matthew focuses on measuring or judging the fruit of teachers, of leaders, of those who profess to be ministers. Luke is on the same, on the other hand, is looking at ourselves, and judging ourselves and the fruit in our own lives.

Now obviously both of them are true, so we must look at the fruit of those that we submit ourselves to spiritually, and we've spoken a lot about the fact that there are people, that people are listening to every Tom, Dick and Harry on the internet, and on Facebook, and believing all sorts of nonsense that people are saying, without looking at the tree, looking at the fruit. But we want to focus this morning on ourselves. And so the principle is very simple, and I don't think I need to spend any time on this part of it.

A good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. It's as simple as that. The tree determines the kind of fruit.

And then he explains that in more practical terms, and he says every tree is known by its own fruit. Men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. It's so self-evident, it's so clear, it's so simple, and yet we, when it comes to our own lives, and when it comes to the lives of those that we submit ourselves to, that we listen to, we seem to miss the point.

We seem to expect good fruit from bad trees, and when we see bad fruit, we assume, well, it's just, it's just a slip. It's out of character. We've spoken about that concept before, but let me just touch on that very briefly.

When someone does something that is bad, whatever it may be, the excuse is often, well, that's not who I am. Now we've heard this a lot in these last few days, and I'm sure that you're as sick as I am of all of the rhetoric that's going on on the Internet and on the news, and just for your information, I think I'm just about cured of the news by now. I don't know that I ever want to watch the news again.

And yet we see people saying things, making statements, and then backtracking and saying, well, that's not who I am. That's just an anomaly. That's just out of character.

You know, I said this, but that's not really what I believe. Well, if you believe the Scriptures, the Scripture says that if there's bad fruit, then it's a bad tree. It's as simple as that.

And if you look at the previous verse, he says that a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Now, I accept that we make mistakes. I accept that we are human and we sin, and that we do things that we ought not to do from time to time.

But one has to look at the next verse, which we're going to spend more time on, and that is really, where is this coming from? Is this coming from the heart, or is this a genuine anomaly? Is this really something that is out of character? And I understand that all of us can be pushed to the limit on an issue or on something, and react in a way that we should not react, that is un-Christlike, that is ungodly. I don't think that there's one of us who can say that we never get to that point. If you do get to that point, well, then you're a better person than I am.

The fact is that we all get to a point that we sometimes do things that we ought not to. But what is the general fruit of the life? Now, also remember that when we look at John chapter 7, and we look at the fruit of preachers, the same principle applies to us. And that is that we look at the things that we do.

For example, what preachers tend to do is they say, well, you know, I live an immoral life, but that doesn't matter. You need to see the miracles that I do. And of course, they're generally fake miracles.

You need to see the number of people who come to my campaigns, the number of people who send me money, and the list goes on and on of things that they claim to be the fruit of their ministry, and that is evidence that they are good trees. But he is not talking about the things that we do in the context of ministry or anything else like that. I think that we all know that even in the world, and remember we want to separate the way the world works and the way that the church works, but at the same time there are similarities.

And we see people in the world that are really bad characters. Let's talk about gangsters. And they rob and steal and they sell drugs and they do all of these things, but then they do some good stuff for the community.

And they say, well, look at my fruit. I'm a good person. You know, I help the community with these things.

In these last few days, people have given hundreds of thousands, some have given millions of dollars to the Black Lives Matter cause. And they say, you see, I'm basically a good person. But where did you get the money from? How did you earn that money? It was, in some cases, immoral.

And so we can't pick out certain things and say, well, you know, you see, that proves that I'm basically good. The question is, what is the general fruit of your life? What is your life producing 24 hours a day, seven days a week? We can all stick on, and you remember we spoken about that conference that I went to and they had ficus trees and they stuck plastic lemons on the ficus trees and it looked really very pretty. But when you got closer, you realized, in fact, that they were not lemon trees to begin with and the lemons were fake.

So we can easily stick on some fruit when we come to church. And obviously these days, because of the restrictions that we're under, we're not together that much, maybe two hours a week at best. It's easy to put on a show for two hours a week.

The question is not what you look like for two hours a week here. The question is, what do you look like 24 hours a day, seven days a week at home and at work and in the rest of your life? That is really the question. I think I may have mentioned to you before, we have a tree in the yard, which I've never

determined what kind of tree it is.

It's some kind of citrus and it produces things that look like oranges, but they taste like lemons, and just occasionally you get a good one. But 99% of them are inedible. They're really just terrible.

So do the odd good ones prove that it's a good tree? No, it's a bad tree. And I've done everything I can. I've watered the tree, I've fed it, I've done all sorts of things to try it, but the tree is bad.

It doesn't matter what you do to it, it's not going to ever produce good fruit. Why do I keep it? Well, because it looks pretty. Now remember that Jesus is not interested, God is not interested in whether we look pretty.

He's interested in the fruit. Remember, Jesus comes to a tree that looks pretty because it has all nice green leaves, but there's no fruit on it, and he curses the tree. So it's not a matter of whether I can occasionally produce something good.

It's not a matter of whether I look good. The question is, is the fruit edible? Is somebody able to be nurtured? Is somebody able to be nourished by the fruit of my life? Are my family, are those my work associates, are those people around me, are they being fed by my life? Is my life a source of nourishment and a source of joy, or in fact is it a source of grief? Now, just have a look quickly at these trees that he mentions in verse 44, because he speaks about figs and grapes. And obviously those are good things.

Maybe not everybody likes figs, but I like figs, and they're particularly popular in the Middle East, in the Mediterranean climate. And so figs are great, and grapes are great, and particularly if you live in a dry, arid environment and come to a fig tree or a grape vine, and there's some nice juicy fruit. But look at what he compares it with.

He doesn't compare it just with any bush. That just doesn't produce fruit. But he compares it with thorns and brambles.

Thorns and brambles. Now if you go to Hebrews chapter 6, you'll find that he speaks about the Christian's life, and he says that when we produce fruit, we receive blessing from God. But if we are producing thorns and brambles, the same words, then we are to be rejected.

And so what are thorns and brambles? Thorns and brambles are things that hurt. There are things that prick. There are things that you don't like to get near to.

And if you come near a thorn tree, you know, if you've got any sense, you know to stay away from it. So what he is comparing, remember he's speaking here about people, not about trees so much, but about people. So there are some people that when you approach them, what they offer is sweetness.

They offer nourishment. They are a joy to be around. But there are other people that when you get near them, they are repulsive.

And I don't mean repulsive in the sense of dirty, but they're aggressive. They say things that are hurtful. They act in a hurtful way.

And so they are just like thorns. When you touch them, you get hurt, and you don't want to get near them. And so there is a question, there is a challenge for us.

What does my life produce? Is it producing that which is drawing people to the Lord Jesus Christ? Is my life producing things that are helpful to other people, that nourish people, that feed people, that are sweet? Or is my life one that produces animosity, pushes people away, hurts people? In fact, there are entire ministries today that are built around this whole idea of hurting people. Now, you know that I preach straight and directly, and many times people are hurt by the word. But the purpose of the hurt is to bring us to Christ.

The purpose is to bring us to repentance, not to drive people away, not to hurt people. And God help me if I ever preach just for the sake of hurting people or getting at people. And yet there are many who do that.

And so there's the first question I must ask myself. What does my life produce? Is it attractive or is it repulsive? And maybe I should have found a better word than repulsive. But that's the word that comes to mind, pushes away, repels people.

What does my life do? Am I attracting people? Now, remember, we can attract people with the wrong stuff. We can attract people with worldly things, with, you know, worldly attitude, with immorality, whatever it is. That's not what we're talking about, obviously.

What we're talking about is attracting people to the sweetness that Christ has deposited in our lives. And so every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush.

Now, verse 45 really is the heart of these three verses. A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, brings forth good. An evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, brings forth evil.

For out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaks. Now, the first thing we must understand, maybe I should have dealt with this under the previous verse, but the first thing we must understand is that the focus is not on changing the fruit. That is what a lot of legalism and a lot of Christianity is about, is people are trying desperately, and people are selling books and preaching sermons on how you can change the fruit.

But you can't change the fruit. You have to change the tree. And that's exactly what legalism and what Deadworks is all about, is it's trying to produce fruit contrary to the nature of the tree.

And that's where you get into this problem where people are able to go along for a certain while and fool people by presenting something that seems to be good, and then revert back to what they really are. The problem is the tree, it's not the fruit. A good tree will automatically produce good fruit.

A bad tree will automatically produce bad fruit. So, we can force people, maybe that's too strong a word, but we can we can cajole people, we can pressurize people, we can manipulate people to act correctly, to do the right thing, to respond correctly. But in the end, it's a waste of time, because the tree is going to go back to its natural inclination, its natural instinct, the moment the pressure is off.

And so I can put pressure on you to play nice when we're here together. But the moment you're away from here, the moment you're away from those who are part of the body of Christ, you will revert back to who you really are. And that stuff comes out.

And so obviously the question is, as we've said earlier, not how are you here, the question is how are you out there? How are you when you're with unbelievers? How are you when you're with unbelieving friends?

That's the question. So what we need to do is we need to change the tree, need to change the tree. So let me go back to this verse because this is really where we are.

How do we change the tree? Well obviously the first way that the tree needs to be changed is by being born again. And that's part of the problem, is that there are too many people in the world and in churches in general today who try desperately to be Christian, to act like Christians, to do Christian things. We see that all the time.

But in fact they are not born again. And so all they're doing is they're sticking fruit on which is not really a real fruit. It's fake.

And it pretty quickly becomes evident that it is fake. So the first thing that needs to happen is that the tree needs to be converted. The tree needs to be changed from a thorn tree to a, what does he say, a fig tree, or a bramble bush needs to be changed to a grapevine.

Now obviously in the natural that's impossible. Well we can graft something in on a rootstock and create the impression that you have something. But what happens is if the tree is stressed, what happens is that that which is grafted in also dies and the natural understock comes up.

Whatever you grafted, whatever's the root becomes evident and the root then begins to grow and the rest of it dies. So it doesn't even quite work in the natural, let alone in the spiritual. So the tree needs to be changed.

We need to be born again. There is no other way that we can change. But now having been born again, we need to continue to be changed because we know so well this whole process of sanctification that when we first get saved there is just so much of the world and of the old way of doing things in our old values and our old responses.

Those things need to be changed. And those things are changed in a gradual, but it should be a steady and real process as I submit myself to the Word of God, being conformed through the renewing of your minds. And so if I am not filling my heart and mind, and I'm going to come back to this idea in a few seconds, but if I'm not filling my heart and mind with the Word of God, well then it's not going to have an impact on me.

If you're listening to the sermon once a week for 45 minutes, it's not going to have an impact on you. So I need to be changed through the Word of God. I need to be changed in a constant walk with God.

I need to be changed in constant fellowship with believers, which I know is difficult these days. But these are the things that God has given us that allows us to change and to become who we ought to be. Obviously part of that process is repentance.

So when we act incorrectly, when we act contrary to what we ought to be, there needs to be repentance. There needs to be a change and a turning away from what we were to what we ought to be. And we spoke about that I think last week.

It's no good covering it up and saying, well, you know, let's just carry on as though nothing happened. No, there needs to be real and genuine repentance. And until there's genuine and real repentance, there won't be genuine and real change.

That's one of the reasons why I've been emphasizing this issue of repentance. Because so many Christians don't want to repent, and yet they want to change. And they wonder why they're still the same 10 years, 20 years down the road, because they cannot change because they're not willing to repent.

So all of those things, and we've spoken about that in great detail in the past. So I'm just giving you the highlights. So let's get to verse 45 finally.

So a good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good. There's that word treasure. We use the word today maybe in a slightly different sense where we speak about in the secular sense, we speak about a treasure like something that the pirates hid away.

That's the treasure. No, when the scripture uses the word treasure, it simply means a storehouse, a storehouse or a bank. And what he is saying is that the good man has a storehouse in his heart, while all of us have a storehouse in our heart.

And what we deposit in there is what's eventually going to come out. There's this old saying that we use in computers, garbage in, garbage out. So people say, well, it's the computer's fault.

No, it's not the computer's fault. You put garbage in, that's what you're going to get out. You can't put rubbish in and think you're going to get cents out of the thing.

And the same is true of any area in life. If you're going to plant in your garden thorns and briars, well, that's what you're going to reap. And what you put into your own heart and mind is what will eventually come out.

And so there's the secret. What are we depositing in our hearts? What are we filling our hearts with? Remember, Jesus said that where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be. And he's speaking about having heavenly treasures rather than earthly treasures.

And you know, it doesn't take long in speaking to someone to figure out where their treasure is. Because pretty quickly they will want to speak about whatever is important to them. I've spoken a lot about fake book lately, and forgive me if I go back there, but it's just such a real exhibit of all of these things today.

But I think we all get friend requests. I think some people are just too happy to get new friend requests, and they approve whatever, accept the request. I tend to be more careful.

And whenever I get a friend request, I immediately go first to the person's Facebook. I want to see what are they posting. Just this last week, an elder in a church was put in charge of the church for a period of time.

And when I was told that this man is now running the church, I went to his Facebook. I found stories about hunting. I saw lots of pictures of fishing.

I saw lots of stories about politics. I could not find a single, not a single post of a text of scripture, or a verse, or a link to a sermon. It's all hunting, and fishing, and politics.

What kind of man is this? He is not a man of God. Is he a Christian? I don't know. Maybe he could be.

But look at what Jesus is saying. What's in your heart is going to come out, and it comes out on your Facebook. I don't know what people think when they post on their Facebooks, or whatever you call the

thing.

You think nobody's going to see it? You think nobody's going to figure out who you really are? And it's not just Facebook. It's in our speech. It's what we say in our conversation with people.

As you know, I listen to lots of preaching, and a lot of sermons, for all sorts of reasons. It doesn't take long to figure out who this guy is. Is he real, or is he fake? Does he really love the Lord, or does he love himself? Does he really honor the Word of God, or is he on some other kind of mission? It really doesn't take that long, because what is in the heart is what comes out.

There is no way that we can deposit into the safety deposit box of our heart, and we think that it's safe because it's never going to come out. It's going to come out, that you can deposit worldly stuff, fake stuff, stuff that is ungodly, stuff that is immoral, or even just stuff that has got nothing to do with God, and think that you're going to produce out of that treasure something that is a spiritual benefit to somebody else. You fill your heart and mind with movies, that's what's going to come out.

I'm horrified by preachers who constantly quote movies as a source of their examples and of their illustrations, because it tells me what their hearts are filled with. And I'm not saying it's wrong to take examples from the world and from politics and from the occasional movie, I guess, or from real life. Jesus did that.

He spoke about the sower and those kinds of things. Here he's talking about trees and the fruit that they bear. But what is it that is filling my mind? What is it that we fill our minds with? It's just so simple, and yet we don't get it right.

What you fill your heart with is what's going to come out. We work very hard at filtering, and we speak about some people who just have no filter. And frankly, sometimes I'm more comfortable with someone who has no filter, because then at least I know what I'm dealing with.

But even those who are best at filtering what comes out are not successful most of the time, or some of the time. And the truth comes out. The reality comes out.

You see, you can't, if you, let's talk about the good. The good treasure of his heart, the good man of his good treasure of his heart brings forth good. So we all want to be helpful.

We all want to be edifying. We all want to be of blessing to other people. But if you've got nothing to give, if there is nothing in your heart, how are you going to give? We speak about marriage in the same context.

We speak about it as being a treasure, a deposit, and what you put in is what you're going to get out. And you can't put in bad stuff into your relationship and think you're going to get good stuff out of it. And you can't put nothing in and think that you're going to get something out.

Now, I know some people just don't get this as far as just money is concerned. They think they can put nothing in a bank and still get money out. It doesn't work that way.

And it doesn't work like that in relationships. And it doesn't work that way in terms of the fruit that we produce in our lives. If you want to be a blessing, you better get filled with the Word of God.

You better be filled with the Lord Jesus Christ and with his nature and with his character. Whatever things are of good report, think on these things. What is it that fills your thinking? In the times when you lie awake

at night or when you have nothing else to do, what is it that you're thinking about? Because it's going to come out.

And so here's the bottom line. I need to make sure that the tree is good. And I need to make sure that what I put into the treasure of my heart is good, because that will determine what comes out.

And the last part of this verse is so well known, for out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaks. In other words, whatever you're full of is going to bubble out at the top. Now, none of us have empty hearts.

It just doesn't happen. We all have—our hearts are all full, if you get the illustration. But what is it full of? And what is it that's going to be bubbling out? My prayer for each one of us, and especially for myself, is that my heart would be filled with the things of God, and that the things that will be coming out, the things that will be bubbling over, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

That out of the abundance of my relationship with the Lord Jesus, my love of the Word of God, of the reality of my walk with Him, will come out those truths and those realities. At the end of the day, it's about Jesus. If you're filled with Jesus, that's what will come out to others.

That's what others will drink of. That's what others will see. Remember, Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit, and He says that out of your innermost being will flow rivers of living water.

And He spoke that about the Holy Spirit. And if I am drinking of God, if I'm eating of God, if I'm absorbing Him, then out of that abundance will rivers of living water in a time when there is nothing. In a time when, I think, more than ever before in the history of the world, in the history of America, we live in a time of drought, where people out there are looking for answers.

They're looking for hope. They're looking for solutions. And many Christians have nothing to give.

But I pray that each one of us, and as a church, we would be those that have those streams of living water in the desert, that people come and say, here is sustenance. Here is satisfaction. Here is something that can quench my thirst and answer my need in the form of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, we thank you for your Word. We thank you, Lord, for these truths, that even though they are simple, they are real. And I pray, Lord, that you'd help us to stop faking it and to be real.

Lord, to be real with ourselves and to judge ourselves first before we judge others. And Lord, that we may look at what kind of tree we are. And Lord, if there's need for change of the tree, Lord, that we may change the tree.

And Lord, if there's need for us to empty out that storehouse of all sorts of stuff that we have accumulated, pack rat conditions in our hearts, piling up all sorts of junk and old stuff that is of no value whatsoever, help us, Lord, to clear out. And Lord, to fill up those storehouses of our minds and of our hearts with your Word and with yourself. That, Lord, we may be able to be streams of living water to those around us.

I pray that you'd help us in Jesus' name. I pray, Lord, that as we come to your table now, that you would make yourself real to us. And Lord, that once again we would be reminded of what Jesus did at the cross.

Thank you, Lord, for the privilege of being able to be together as a body again this morning. And even though, Lord, we have to do things a slightly different way, at the same time we're able to be in one building and we're able to remember what Jesus did for us. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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