

The Sermon On The Level - Part 4

Luke 6:43-49

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In the Sermon on the Level there really are no breaks, so that makes it challenging to preach through it. From week-to-week, it is one continuous flow. In our last study in the Gospel of Luke of the Sermon on the Level, we saw that the marks of a true disciple were that they had a magnanimous and discerning disposition. Jesus had listed for us the qualities of a true disciple. So we see they are not judgmental, they do not condemn others, and they are forgiving and giving. All of that is the fruit of agape love.

They also have a discerning disposition, verses 39-42. They are not judgmental but are discerning. They make judgments and distinctions. And Jesus warned not to follow false teachers, in verse 39. He said they were blind leaders of the blind. In verse 40, He said that the false teachers were earthly, and in verses 41-42, they were hypocritical. Now in our text today, verses 43-45, Jesus says they are evil.

So the context of everything we cover in concluding this Sermon on the Level is a warning that we not follow blind leaders of the blind or false teachers. We are not to follow those who are earthly, sensual, devilish and hypocritical. Rather we are to follow what is true; we are to follow Christ and His Word and be obedient to Him. And we are to make distinctions between true and false teachers. So the context is false teachers, those who say "Lord, Lord" but do not obey His Word.

Jesus tells us that we should bear fruit and build on a right foundation as He wraps up this sermon. To teach us this point, Jesus first gives us a lesson from horticulture. And the second picture is a lesson from architecture. The first picture is that a good tree bears good fruit, and a bad tree bears bad fruit. The second picture is that we'll see a house built on rock that is strong in following Christ's Word and a house built on sand that is not built on obedience to Christ and His Word.

The first picture is in verses 43-45. A true disciple bears good fruit. Jesus starts by saying the word "for." It is a connecting word. It goes back to verse 42, where it says, "First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye." This is a hypocritical person who is trying to help others when they have their own sin that they don't deal with in their own life.

Verses 43-45, "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 in this section, Jesus is using a horticultural axiom. What we observe and know as fact is clearly true from horticulture.

And He is applying this to false teachers and true teachers. Notice in verse 43 He says, "For a good tree does not bear bad fruit." A good tree bears good fruit, and a corrupt tree produces bad fruit. So Jesus is drawing this lesson from horticulture.

Our hearts, or inner dispositions, determine the kind of fruit that comes from our life. It applies to our words, from our lips, and our works, our deeds. So we are allowed to be fruit inspectors. Someone said that we are not to be judging others with a critical, censorious, fault-finding attitude, but we are to be fruit inspectors.

I've had people say, "Well, don't judge me!"

"I'm not judging you. I'm just inspecting your fruit, and it's no good. So you are a bad tree. Bad tree, bad fruit."

So Jesus is not talking about kind; He's talking about quality. You can have a good orange or a bad orange. A good orange tree, good fruit. If you get a good apple from an apple tree, you say, "That's a good tree." If you get a bad apple, that's a bad tree. So this is the axiom that Jesus is conveying.

In James 1:26, it says, "If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue..." or "his words" "...but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless." So these false teachers are blind, verse 39; earthly, verse 40; hypocritical, verses 41-42; and they are evil, verses 43-45.

Notice verse 44. It says, "For..." and here's the rationale "...every tree is known by its own fruit." How do you know an orange tree? It has oranges on it. How do you know you have an apple tree? It has apples on it. So every tree is known by its fruit. That's why it's called an axiom; it's just plain and clear, and everyone knows it's a fact.

And every individual is known by its fruit. He makes the application in verse 45. "A good man out of the good treasure..." From the word "treasure," we get our word "thesaurus." So He is actually picturing a man's heart, or inner life, like a treasure box. And out of that heart, or treasure, comes either good or bad. "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."

As I said, Jesus is talking here about true and false, blind, hypocritical and evil teachers. You shouldn't be following the false teachers, but you have to make a distinction as to whether it's a good tree or a bad tree. If it's good fruit, it's a good tree; if it's bad fruit, it's a bad tree.

The context is false teachers, verse 39. "And He spoke a parable to them: 'Can the blind lead the blind?'" The answer is "No." "Will they not both fall into the ditch?" The answer is "Yes." So don't be blind and follow a blind leader.

A true disciple of Christ is to judge a man's words, doctrine and moral behavior. So you look for

the fruit of their lips and the fruit of their lives, verse 45.

Now how do we discover whether a man is true or false, good or bad, good fruit or bad fruit unless we make a judgment? Not judgmental, not critical or censorious, but we must make a sound judgment.

Let me make some points. We may have to make a distinction between making a judgment and offering a judgment. There are five ways to make a judgment. Number one, you should make them humbly. When you judge someone, do it in humility. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" So when you are going to judge someone else, first judge yourself. Remember the plank in your own eye. "First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye."

If you were going in to have surgery, you were in the prep room, the doctor came in to see about the surgery and he had a big board hanging out of his eye, how excited would you be to have him cut you open? You wouldn't be. Maybe he was going to do eye surgery, but he can't see. So he needs to deal with his own sin and get the board out before he can see to operate on you.

So if you were going to judge whether someone else is good fruit or bad fruit, do it with humility.

Number two, do it prayerfully. James 5:16 says, "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed." So you'd better be praying and prayerfully go to that person when you judge them.

Number three, you judge Biblically. This is so very, very important. What is the rule, the standard or the highest court of appeal? The Bible. "Thus saith the Lord." It ends all arguments. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..." That means it is breathed out by God. That's a reference to the breath of God. Not breathing in but breathing out. "...and is profitable," Paul tells Timothy.

One of the greatest attacks on the Bible is not on its inerrancy or infallibility or inspiration, but is on its sufficiency. Some say the Bible is not enough; you need the Bible plus The Book of Mormon, or the Bible plus The Pearl of Great Price, or the Bible plus the doctrine of great covenant, or the Bible plus this or that. They say we need to add to the Bible. The Bible is not enough; you need psychology or philosophy or man's wisdom added to it. No, no, no!

If God's Word is not sufficient for man's needs, where can we go? "Well, I don't know. These Bible thumpers think all the answers are in the Bible." Yes; I believe they are. Not only is all Scripture given by God's breath "and is profitable," he tells us for what: "for doctrine..." for what is right "...for reproof..." for what is wrong "...for correction..." how to get right "...for instruction in righteousness," for how to stay right. It's right there in the Bible. The Bible is sufficient for all our needs.

That's why here at Revival, we offer you the Bible. That's all we have. Nothing more, nothing less. The Bible is God's living, powerful, active Word.

So when you go to someone to make a judgment, make sure you're on solid, Biblical ground. And doctrine comes before duty. Principles come before practice. All of the Pauline epistles are doctrine followed by duty and practice.

Number four, we should judge lovingly. Don't be judgmental or critical. Be loving.

And number five, we should judge mercifully. Have you ever had someone come to judge you for what you've done wrong? And you've done wrong and sinned, and they've kind of challenged you on that, but they've just beat you up with it? You say, "Mercy! Have mercy on me!"

Has God not been merciful to you? The answer is "Yes," because He's a merciful God. Has God not been kind to you? The answer is "Yes," because He's a kind God. He's also holy and righteous. So when we go to someone, we need to be humble, prayerful, Biblical, loving and merciful.

Now let me give you some practical tips when we offer our judgment. There are three of them. First, do it privately. Matthew 18:15 says, "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone." Don't tell other people first. "Hey, I want you to pray for me, because so-and-so is really sinning and messing up. I just want you to know about it, so you can pray. Then I can go to them and deal with it."

"Have you gone to them first?"

"No, I haven't talked to them yet. I need to tell other people to pray." No. Don't you think you should talk to them first?! Privately?

This is one of the most violated Scriptures in all the Word of God. I think that's partly because we're just afraid. We're afraid to confront people. We're afraid to deal with sin in other people. Many times the plank in our own eye is keeping us from the sin in other people's eye. So we are to take care of our plank, get right with God, and then go to them privately.

Second, go to them gently and constructively. I like Galatians 6:1-2. Paul said, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass..." or "stumbles and falls into sin" "...you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." The word "restore" is a medical term used of mending a broken bone.

I've never broken a bone, but I hear it's painful. I've had a friend break his femur one time. It was radical! So if I ever have a broken bone, I'm going to ask them to put me to sleep a week before they set it. I want to be out for a week. And I want to be out for two weeks after I come out of surgery. I don't want to feel any pain, praise God! I'm a sissy.

If you break a bone, you want the doctor to be gentle when he puts it back in place. I want a gentle doctor. I want one who can see, and I want him to be gentle. So “considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”

Third, we must also offer judgment by being an example, being exemplary. Your own lives should be an example to others.

So we are to be humble, prayerful, Biblical, loving, merciful, private, gentle and constructive and exemplary.

in doctrinal judgments, based on the truth of God's Word; in moral judgments; and in heart judgments.

You say, “Well, how can we know someone's heart?” Verse 45 says, “Out of the abundance of the heart [the] mouth speaks.” What's treasured in your heart comes out of your lips.

Someone said, “Well, you don't know my heart!”

“I don't know your heart, but I know your words!” That's because your words come from your heart.

This is funny. Because people don't know I'm a pastor, they've used some cuss words around me. Then they ask me, “What do you do, by the way?”

“I'm a pastor.”

“Oh! Sorry! I don't know where that came from.”

I say, “I know where it came from. It came from your heart.” Your heart is the treasure chest. If it's in the well, it'll come up in the bucket.

So you can judge a person's heart by their words and by the way they live, by their words and their works, by the fruit of their lives. You can make a doctrinal, moral and a heart distinction. How important that is.

Jesus, in Matthew 7, warned about this point in the Sermon on the Mount. He warned that there are wolves in sheep's clothing. So He's clearly talking about false teachers there. There are such things as false teachers. And there are objective standards by which we can judge them. We can know false teachers by their fruit. Do they have a Christ-like character, and do they conform to the Scriptures? The fruit of a man's life corresponds to the quality of a man's heart. “Out of the abundance of the heart [the] mouth speaks.” So bear fruit for the glory of God.

Men, fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers, what is the fruit of your life? What is coming from your life? Are you bearing fruit for the glory of God? Psalm 1:1-3 says, “Blessed is the

man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates..." not meditates; a lot of that going on "...day and night." He will be like what? Here you go, dads. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper."

There's the blessed man who's planted in the Word of God, obedient to the Scriptures and his life is bearing fruit for the glory of God.

Now in the second picture, He moves from bearing fruit to building on a foundation. In Jesus closing His sermon, He shows us that we should bear fruit for the glory of God, but we should also build on the right foundation, verses 46-49.

There is no break in the subject; He was talking about "an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil." Now Jesus says, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord'?" This is a verbal, lip pronouncement. This is "Curios, Curios..." It is used twice for emphasis or emotion. "...and do not do the things which I say?" So there is a contradiction. He is saying, "You say with your lips 'Lord, Lord,' which means 'master,' but you do not follow with your life. You do not do what He says."

Verse 47, "Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them..." note "comes"... "hears"... "does" "...I will show you whom he is like." So here is the wise man. "He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."

In verse 46, Jesus moves from an agricultural picture to an architectural picture, building a house. By it, He tells us of the danger of an empty confession or profession. You say with your lips, "Lord, Lord." Yes; Jesus is Lord. In the Greek, it is "Curios," which is equivalent to the Old Testament "Yahweh" or "Jehovah." So you say, "Jesus, Lord," but you don't live under the authority of His Lordship.

We all know people like that. "I'm a Christian; I believe in Jesus." But when you look at their words and their lives, they're not consistent with their confession. You say one thing, but you live a different way. We also call this "hypocrisy." So the danger of false confession, verse 46, is that they claim to be disciples and "call Me 'Lord, Lord,'" but they don't obey Him.

Their claim is orthodox; He is Lord. You can actually believe right things about Jesus and not be saved, because you haven't been born again. You haven't trusted Him as your Lord and Savior. You can believe everything the Bible teaches, but you haven't received Christ and submitted to His Lordship and live according to it. If that's the case, then your confession is just empty, vain and not real.

In Matthew 7:21-23, the problem is that they do not do the things that Jesus said to do. So building your house on the rock is in obedience to Christ's Word. So fruit bearing and obedience. Then it says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven." Jesus makes it very clear that people will say on Judgment Day that Jesus is Lord, but they are not really, truly saved. "...but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."

This is why we need to be obedient. We're not saved by works, we're not going to heaven by our obedience, but we're saved by grace through faith in Christ, and it is manifested or shown by the way we live in obedience.

Verse 22, "Many will say to Me in that day..." the Judgment Day "...Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name..." that's pretty impressive "...cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" Notice their appeal here is not that they know Christ personally and they've been filled with the Spirit; it's just that they do works. Now notice verse 23: "And then I will declare to them..." some of the most frightening words in the Bible "...I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" Wow!

There are going to be people on the Judgment Day who will say, "Lord, didn't we prophesy in Your name, cast out demons and do many mighty works in Your name?" But Jesus will say, "I never knew you. You say you know Me, but I don't know you." So we need a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. What an awakening that is going to be for some people on Judgment Day! They believe right, they do good works, but they never had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Christianity is the life of Christ in your soul. It's not conduct. It's being born again. Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:3 and 6, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." You can't get to heaven by doing good deeds; you must be born of the Spirit. "That which is flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Nicodemus was a Jew, he was religious but he was lost. So you can have all these things going for you and still be lost.

So the false teachers' confession was orthodox; they called Him "Lord, Lord," it was fervent and had emotion in it. Whenever you have a repeating of someone's name, it's for emphasis of emotion, feeling and intimacy.

It was also a works profession, Matthew 7:22, and a false profession. And in verse 23, Jesus said, "I never knew you." That's a sobering thought.

So these statements Jesus made in Matthew 7 are right between Luke 6:43-45 and 46-49. Jesus gave us more information in the Matthew passage.

What are the marks of true discipleship? Let me mention three things, from Luke 6:47. First, they come to Jesus—"whoever comes to Me"; second, they hear Him—"hears My sayings"; and third, they do what He says—"does them." So the marks of true disciples is that they come to Jesus Christ, they hear His Word—you're to be commended that you're in church today. You're

hearing the Word of God, but do you really obey it?

I've preached long enough that I can tell by looking at the congregation if someone is really listening and paying attention. Usually if they're looking at their watch, I know they're not listening to what I have to say. Or sometimes they come to church to take a nap while the sermon's going on. I've had people think it's a compliment to me to say, "I listen to your sermons every night; they put me to sleep." Praise God. And I thought it would be so cool in the middle of my sermon to say, "Hey, wake up that guy right there, and ask him how his nap was!" You're hearing but you're not really listening.

Sometimes people come to church, they listen to God's Word, but it's like listening to flight attendants explain an aircraft's safety features. You ever notice that? No one's listening! I once heard a flight attendant say, "If we lose oxygen, the mask will drop down, place it over your navel and breathe normally." She was trying to see if anyone was listening. Nobody got it; they missed it completely. But if you're on a plane, it's starting to go down, you'd say, "What do we do?! Where's the life vest?! What're we supposed to do?!" So you're gonna want to listen, because your life depends on it.

I sometimes feel like standing up and saying, "Everyone listen to the flight attendant, because we may crash! I just wanted to encourage all of you." And they say, "in case of a water landing." What's with that?! You mean a crash in the water?!

But we just don't listen. "Well, I go to church every week."

"Do you listen?"

"No, I don't really listen." So it goes in one ear and out the other. We don't really listen with the heart in order to obey. How important that is.

So the important point is in verse 47: "does them." The key words are "comes...hears...does." Then "I will show you whom he is like." James 1:22 says, "Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves," or your religion is vain.

Now notice what we have in verses 47-48. We have a person who is "doing." And what is he like? In Matthew 7:24, this person is called a "wise man." In Luke it says, "He is like a man building a house, who dug deep..." Notice that he didn't just build it quickly. "...and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock."

We're going to learn that this rock, this foundation for this house, is actually Christ's teachings and obedience to them. So in the context to the Sermon on the Plain or the Sermon on the Mount, it's His Word lived out in our daily lives. And you might broaden that to all of Scripture. If you build your house on the Scriptures, on the Word of God, the storms come, the wind blows, the floods beat on your house, but it will stand and not fall, neither in this life nor on Judgment Day.

Building your house on the rock is evidence of true salvation based on your obedience. Building your house on the rock is evidence that you're truly saved. Building your house on the rock enables you to truly stand at the final judgment on Judgment Day and in the storms of life.

When I officiate at weddings, I quite often read from Matthew 7 about the wise man and the foolish man, because this young couple is just starting to build their life together. Build your marriage, build your family, build your home on the rock of the Scriptures. When the storms come—and this parable indicates that storms do come to all of us, such as bereavement, loss, pain, disease, hardships, death—they will come to beat on your house. And the only way for you to stand strong is to be built on the rock of Scripture. Dig deep, obey God's Word, live out the Scriptures by the power of the Holy Spirit. So on Judgment Day, we will stand strong.

We saw the blessed man in Psalm 1. But Psalm 1 ends by saying, "The way of the ungodly shall perish." They "are like chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous."

So in this life when the storms come, your house stands strong. In the future judgment of God, you will stand the test of judgment and will spend eternity in heaven.

Are you a wise man, verse 48? Are you hearing and obeying the words of Jesus Christ? Then there is the foolish man, verse 49. "But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth..." Matthew said it was "sand" "...without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great." So its fall was in life and in death, in the final judgment.

By the way, there are only two houses here. In the Sermon on the Mount, there were two roads, two gates and two destinies. And now it closes with two builders; one is wise and one is foolish. The wise man or wise woman builds their life on the Scriptures, obedience to God and His Word. "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Psalm 53:1). Or he just disregards God's Word and tries to build his life himself. That is like building on sand.

You know what the most important part of the house is? It's the foundation. We have two houses, they both looked the same, but the difference was the foundation. Two builders, two houses, but two different foundations. So everything was the same, except for the foundations.

Which are you? A wise builder or a foolish builder? Are you truly a child of God, walking in obedience to God's Word, building your house, your marriage, your family on the Word of God, on the Scriptures? When you come to church on Sunday, do you say, "Speak Lord, my heart is receptive, Your servant is listening"? There is nothing more important than to hear God's Word and put it into practice.

This Father's Day, as in every day of my life, there is nothing I want more for my children and my grandchildren—and should the Lord tarry and I have great-grandchildren—than for them to love God, love the Bible and live out the Word of God.

So you need to be an example as a man. Just by the impact of your life. You can't tell them one thing but do another. You must be consistent; you can't be a hypocrite. Get that plank out of your eye, dad. See clearly to help your kids to remove their specks. And be building your marriage, be building your family, be building your house on the rock of Scripture.

The rock here is not Jesus; it's His teaching. We are to build our lives in Christ and on Christ, but "the rock" is the Bible, the B-i-b-l-e, the Word of God, the Scriptures, and being obedient to it.

The storms will come, but if your house is built on Christ, it can weather those storms of life.