

In His great sermon, Jesus began by revealing the **character** of His disciples, then the **calling** of them

Then the center of the entire sermon, the **condition** of His disciples of surpassing righteousness

But then Jesus showed the **conduct** of His disciples followed by His **commands** for them and

the final one was what Pastor Tim VanSumeren showed us: entering the narrow gate

We must leave everything at the narrow gate...pride, independence, self-righteousness, self-reliance and self-confidence and follow after Christ

This is the gate of repentance, dropping the baggage and leaving it behind

Comparatively few will be willing to do this, because it will bring trouble and tribulation

But there will be many who will try and prevent people from going through that gate, and that fact moves us to the first of several **cautions** Jesus gave

### **PP 1-The caution**

***‘Beware of false prophets’*** is a word in the bible that always sounds the alarm for danger

In the town I grew up in, the fire station siren was the warning system for an emergency

Jesus is ringing the bell, hitting the siren, blowing the trumpet, and friends, I would ask you to consider something deeply

In the Old Testament, the greatest threat to Israel did not come from the Amalekites, Philistines, Assyrians or Babylonians or any other nation

The greatest threat came from within, from false prophets who led them away from God

Absolutely nothing changed in the New Testament with the church and it remains true today

False prophets, false teachers, false pastors stand at the narrow gate and deceive people to pass on by toward the broad gate

**PP *“For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.”* Matthew 24:24**

We need to note something...these false prophets are leaders, people of influence, among us

They ***‘lead astray’*** meaning that they have found their way to a position of influence to lead, and the direction they lead is always away from the narrow gate

But His caution continues as He says they will ***“come to you in sheep’s clothing”***

They will ***‘come’*** to us, on the move, looking like those sent to proclaim God’s truth

Jesus is telling us to be vigilant now, to be alert and ready

For when they come, they won’t look like false prophets, they almost never do

They will come ***“in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”*** 7:15

Wolves were the natural predator of sheep, terrifying both shepherd and sheep alike

They have one goal...destroy the flock...false prophets are ravenous wolves

**PP *“I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.”* Acts 20:29-31**

False prophets and false teachers can be difficult to spot so Jesus helps us recognize them

## **PP 2-The discernment**

***“You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?” 7:16***

Would you look at our passage and count how often you see the words *‘fruit’* or *‘fruits’*?

In both the ESV and NIV we see them 7 times

Twice Jesus says ***‘You will recognize them by their fruits’***

Let me offer some ways to detect and discern the teaching of a false prophet or false pastor

### **PP i-Overemphasis of Prosperity**

Greed and the constant subject of money is one clear indicator of false teaching

These false teachers are men ***“of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that***

**PP *godliness is a means of gain” (1 Tim. 6:5)***

It is amazing how many believers are enticed by this teaching with the promises of financial prosperity and the abundance of the world’s things

### **PP ii-Exaggerated View of Grace**

This may be the most difficult to detect because God *is* full of grace and mercy toward us

It’s like kudzu teaching, easy to get in, spreads fast, but hard to get out

It is the off-balance teaching of God’s grace that negates the need to obey Him

He does expect us to obey His commands, and has given us the power to do so

But hyper-grace teachers present a God Who loves and never condemns, who doesn’t judge us by our conduct and offer a back door license for immorality

They present Jesus as our savior, but our optional Lord

They are leery of the Old Testament God and big on the New Testament Jesus

### **PP iii-Antinomianism**

This is a long word, right?

But it literally means *‘against law’*, and it is a short jump from an overemphasis on grace to anything goes because Jesus has set us free

It sees repentance as a single event at salvation, never needing to be repeated

It sees obedience to God as good but not critical for the Christian

You go to the altar, decide to get saved, and then live no differently than before

But Jesus didn’t set us free to sin, He set us free from sin, and to serve and worship Him forever

Yet this false teaching has God’s love trumping His holiness, with God basically shutting His eyes to our guilt in order to save us

The truth is, His just holiness was satisfied by putting our sins on Christ, Who died in our place

### **PP iv-Deification of Man**

This may be the most pervasive false teaching today, which starts with humanity, goes to God and ends with humanity

God is the center, not us  
But in this teaching, the constant and ultimate aim is realizing God's love for us, and His  
constant actions for us  
And while God's love for us is greater than we can know, and He constantly acts for us, the bible  
doesn't end there  
He sets us free to love and adore and center our lives on Him  
The biblical story is about our glorious God Who created us, redeems us, transforms us, and  
dwells with us forever

**PP** *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it"* **Matthew 16:24-25**

### **PP v-Lessening the Authority of the Word**

There is a difference between bad teaching and false teaching, and every false teacher I have  
ever examined lowers the authority of God's Word  
And this goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden, with Satan's temptation with Eve  
**PP** *"Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"* **Genesis 3:1**  
Phrases like re-imaging Paul, or Re-thinking the gospel tend to be the hallmarks of these teachers  
And over-abundance of questions subtly intended, not to get us to see our hearts more, but to  
introduce doubt and suspicion in the scriptures

### **PP vi-Rejecting Hell**

The most prevalent area where false teachers undermine the authority of Scripture is the subject  
of hell and future punishment  
God's love is emphasized and His wrath is an embarrassing subject muted in their pulpits  
It's one thing to under or over emphasize hell, but false teachers erase it from existence  
Yet Jesus Himself talked more of hell than anyone else in Scripture, and not only Him, but  
virtually all the NT writers  
They create scenarios of universalism, where everyone eventually makes it to heaven, a get out  
of jail free card  
Hell is as real as heaven, and gospel preaching holds out the blessing of one and the horror of the  
other

Every one of these false teachings leads people away from the narrow gate, to the broad one  
They are spewing from ambassadors of Satan arising from within the church

**PP** But, like John Calvin once said, *"Nothing is more difficult than to counterfeit virtue. If it is  
not there, it will sooner or later show itself."* **John Calvin**

This is why newcomers shouldn't be teachers  
It's not that we should be suspicious, just cautious  
It takes time for grapes and figs to grow, and it takes time for a teacher to be proven true  
And that is a principle that Jesus gave that is not immediately obvious...sooner or later...it takes  
time for a tree to grow fruit

My brother told me last weekend of a man who wanted to teach and preach and sit on the leadership board of his church, but there were all kinds of warnings that surfaced that moved the leadership team to say no  
The man crafted a document listing all his perceived failings of the lead pastor and leadership team and put a copy on each car in the parking lot  
It takes time to let the fruit grow and reveal the true identity of the tree

There are a few ways to understand what the ‘fruit’ is that Jesus refers to, the most obvious being the life and deeds of the person

Until the 1700’s, the most prevailing thought was that fruit referred to the teaching of the person  
But another way that fruit can be understood, is the effect the teacher has on his or her followers  
A false prophet will produce in his or her followers diseased fruit  
A true prophet, or teacher or pastor will produce good fruit

***“So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.” 7:17-18***

This principle was what fueled the hard words of Jesus toward the scribes and Pharisees

***PP “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.” Matthew 23:15***

### **PP 3-The warning**

***“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”***

But there is one more insight I want to bring out and it brings us face to face with the gospel

***PP “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.” Jeremiah 17:7-8***

Friends, let’s take these words of Jesus in an intensely inward look

Have you entered the narrow gate, and as Jeremiah said, are you trusting in the Lord?

Have you left all confidence in your goodness, your deserving of God’s kindness at the gate?

Have you looked up on that cross and seen the suffering savior crucified, for you...for you?!

His agony willingly endured for your blessing?

His death for your life?

You will be like a tree that ***‘does not cease to bear fruit’***

He has saved you, given you a new heart, and His strength flows in your life, giving you the want to in order to do what you ought to, the desire to obey Him

But there is another person, who has not and will not look to Jesus for salvation

They are not poor in spirit, or sorry for their sin, or meek, or desiring to made righteous, nor merciful or pure or peacemaking

Their hearts display none of the beatitudes, they are false prophets, and teachers

They are workers in the church without changed hearts, and they cannot bear fruit, they cannot truly live as Christ’s disciples or reproduce healthy disciples

This person has passed by the narrow gate refusing to enter it, instead going his/her own way

Utterly unable to bear true fruit, and cut down and thrown into eternal fire forever!

Friends, there are two admonitions I offer you as I close:

Examine the message, lives and effects of those you allow to be in positions of influence...me included

Examine your own life to see if you are bearing fruit, having entered the narrow gate

Amen?

Pray