

How to Be an Excellent Disciple, Fecundity, Part 2

Luke 6:43-45

We'll start in Luke 6:39. "He," Jesus, "also told them a parable: 'Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.

"'Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye," when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

"'For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes

picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.'"

Fruitfulness receives blessing from God. Thorns and thistles, fruitlessness brings about the cursing of God, the judgment of God by burning, that's the warning. For everyone who listened to Jesus that day, with a Jewish cultural background or familiar with Jewish history, which was most if not everybody here in his presence on this day, this image of thorns and thistles, thornbushes and bramble bushes set in contrast to figs and grapes, Jesus' point is strikingly clear: Stay away from those teachers who produce thorns and thistles, who are not producing figs and grapes because they lead you to judgment.

In fact, go back to the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount before Jesus started preaching. Notice in verse 17 it says, "Jesus came down stood on a level placed, great crowd of disciples and multitude of people from," where? "All Judea and Jerusalem." Why are they there? Only because God has allowed the

remnant to return to Israel after being judged for being fruitless.

The Old Testament is filled with this imagery especially in judgment context, where, where God there appealed through the prophets to the consciences of the people using this agrarian farmer language to help them to sympathize with God's concerns over an unproductive land. In Isaiah 5, God says, "Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard." And the love song that follows is really a lament because Judah was an unproductive vineyard.

Very strong judgment passages and they're based all on this principle of fecundity. Namely, what God plants should grow, should bear fruit, should yield a plentiful crop. So when those who claim to be God's people, claim to be planted by God, when they don't grow and they don't produce fruit, well, what's the problem? Did God let 'em down? Remember, whatever God plants, his plants always bear fruit. That's the principle we find in Genesis 1:11 to 13, day three, creation week.

Subversion of that principle. How is it that God could plant something, and it doesn't bear fruit? Because of sin. The subversion of this principle of fecundity, the thorns, the thistles, the thornbushes, the bramble bushes, you know what? That's also Genesis language. Remember what God told Adam in the curse?

Genesis 3:17 to 18, God said to Adam, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the fruit of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you."

This imagery in Luke 6 contrasting the figs and the grapes on the one hand, set in contrast with the unproductive thornbushes and bramble bushes, Jesus is setting us up for what he says in verse 45. There is a moral component in this principle of fecundity. Bearing good fruit is connected with God's blessing. Bearing bad fruit is connected with his cursing. There's actually a hint of the warning in this illustration that he uses.

Just as we know instinctively not to go looking for edible fruit in the sin-cursed plants, the thornbushes, the bramble bushes, we demonstrate we understand intuitively this principle of fecundity. That which cannot produce fruit does not produce fruit. And now Jesus completes the transition moving from stating and illustrating the principle of fecundity in the physical world, demonstrating now the spiritual significance of this principle for discipleship. And that's our third point. The principle demonstrated.

As clearly, as you and I can see the principle of fecundity in the plant kingdom, Jesus sees just as clearly, more clearly, in the spiritual kingdom. Look at verse 45, "The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil. For out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaks." As I said back in verse 43, we saw a qualitative contrast between good and bad trees and good and bad fruit. Here, though, we see a moral contrast between good and evil.

So unlike verse 43 where the word for good was *kalos*, here the word is *agathos*, moral goodness; moral virtue. Verse 43 used the word *sapros* to speak of poor-quality fruit, here in verse 45, the word is not *sapros*, which is useless, but *poneros*; refers to moral evil, moral wickedness. Wow! Our Lord has a very black and white view of the world, doesn't he?

He uses very politically incorrect categories of good and evil. He divides humanity into the good man and the evil man. And this binary set of categories, it doesn't fit very well in our modern world, does it? Jesus found it didn't fit very well in his world either. They crucified him for this kind of language. So we should expect the same kind of hostility if we follow him. And if we think, and speak, and behave like he spoke and thought and behave, you know what's going to happen? We're going to be bearing good fruit. It may bring hostility, but it's bearing good fruit.

It's a first notice and in verse 45, there we have the good man. Good man, morally good, because the good man's heart is filled good treasure, that's what he brings up from the vault.

He's got nothing else there, but good treasure, moral goodness, moral virtue.

On the other hand, in verse 45, we've got the evil person. His heart, too, is a storehouse. It's got a treasure chest in it of evil, of wickedness, of bad intentions, and bad plans. Evil thoughts, evil desires, so what he brings up from the vault into the surface of his life, though he try to restrain it, though he try to look good on the outside, it's full of evil. Most notable, most immediately perceived evidence of the evil in his heart is what comes out of his mouth. "For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."

The heart in Jesus' day, it wasn't like in our contemporary English, it wasn't the seat of emotions and feelings like we use the heart. It also didn't refer primarily to the muscle that pumps blood through our body. The heart in the Hebrew and Greek mind and culture, it referred to the mind. It referred to the thought life. So biblically, the heart is the mission control center of your life. It's where you find in you what you truly love and what you truly hate. All that is in your heart. It's

the source of your thoughts, your intentions, your decisions, your motivations, your will.

Heart and mouth are connected, just as fingers and keyboards and keypads are connected. What you say, what you type, what you text, what you post, what you otherwise convey it comes out of your life. Whatever you communicate is coming forth from your heart. Now some of you may be thinking at this point, thinking about the good man from the good treasure in his heart.

You may remember Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. Who can understand it?" You may be thinking, wait a minute here. How can Jesus say that the good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good? Are there any good people? Isn't moral badness a condition of all of our hearts? Well, yes, for all people. And then by God's amazing grace, no for some people. Let me explain. And I want to be really, really clear on this point.

Jesus is not somehow here making a u-turn and advocating for some works/righteousness system. That is, bear good fruit to



become a good person. That's not what he's saying. That would contradict the rest of his teaching, along with the entirety of the Old and New Testaments. That's not what Jesus is saying. Rather, this here is Jesus' acknowledgement of the need for spiritual regeneration. God must create a brand-new heart in all of his disciples. Jesus understands this.

Let's think about this for a minute. First of all, moral evil is the condition, the natural condition of every heart that's born into this world, born into sin. We're all fallen creatures. We're born as evil and wicked. We're dead in trespasses and sins, Ephesians 2, by nature children of wrath. Jesus repeatedly acknowledges that fact in Matthew 7:11. He says that "We, being born into sin, are evil."

There's a passage very similar to this one in our text here over in Matthew 12:33 to 35. And Jesus makes the same point as he condemns the Pharisees. He says, "Either make the tree good and its fruit good or make the tree bad and its fruit bad. For the tree is known by its fruit." And then he says to the Pharisees, "You brood of vipers! How can you speak good when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth

speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good. The evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.”

So Jesus, he assumes in this text, tacitly affirms that among his true disciples, no good will come out of them until regeneration takes place. They must be born again. They must become new creatures. Regeneration must precede any good deeds. Any deeds of God that comes out of a life, regeneration has to happen first. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he’s a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the news has come,” 2 Corinthians 5:17.

“The new self,” Ephesians 4:24, is “created after the likeness of God and true righteousness and holiness.” That’s the situation for the new man. Then along with the doctrine of regeneration, Jesus can see ahead the doctrine of justification by faith. It’s based on his own substitutionary atonement for the sins of all who believe. It’s based on the imputation of his own righteousness to the believing sinner.

He sees the doctrine of sanctification and glorification before him. The perfection of the saints in glory. He knows that those whom God foreknew, Romans 8:29 and 30. "Those whom God foreknew God had predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Those whom he predestined he also called, those whom he also called he also justified, those whom he justified he also glorified." The whole thing he sees.

So in Luke 6:45, the evil person out of his evil treasure who produces evil, that's the sinner. That's the one remaining in his fallen condition. Even if he's sitting in church. Even if he's a Pharisees. Even if he's a teacher. He's producing evil, bearing bad fruit, that's the sinner. He's still in his fallen condition. He cannot help but bring forth the evil that's resident within his fallen heart. He remains in that condition. He will face God on judgment day and he will be condemned to an eternity in hell. That's what Jesus says.

But the good person, who out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, that's the regenerate believer. That's the one who knows Jesus Christ as Savior from all sins and Lord of

all life. That's the one whose sin is forgiven, who's united to Christ by faith, the one whose covered by the righteousness of Jesus Christ and follows him in loving obedience and worship.

Telltale difference between the two: it's the speech. "For out of the abundance of his heart his mouth speaks." Again, think about what you say, what you type, what you text, what you post, or otherwise communicate because it reveals what's in your heart and you cannot hide it. Just quickly, I want to show you this over in Galatians chapter 5. Paul wrote this letter to a very young church in southern Galatia; it's the central part of modern-day Turkey. He found it necessary to confront this church and then correct their doctrine and behavior because it wasn't in line with the Gospel.

And in this passage here in Galatians 5:16 and following, you're going to see how his correction starts with internal attitudes and affections, and then it connects those internal affections with external behaviors. Galatians 5:16 and 17, "But I say, walk by the spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the spirit, the desires of the spirit are against the flesh. These

two are opposed to each other to keep you from the things you want to do.” Look at the language there. Desires, things you want to do, things of the flesh, things of the spirit, that’s all talking about internal stuff.

Desires of the flesh, desires of the spirit, the Holy Spirit. The desires of the flesh, that refers to carnal affections. Things that lead you into sin, committing sins and that’s contrasted with spiritual affections, which are produced, by the way, not in you by you, but in you by the Holy Spirit. It’s a God’s work.

Verse 18, “But if you’re led by the spirit, you’re not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.” That’s one list. And Paul warns you that if you are in that list, he says, “I warn you as I warned you before that those who do such things or practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

But the fruit of the spirit, the fruit of the tree planted by God, the fruit of the spirit is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." Notice the fruit and the source, this is the Holy Spirit's fruit, not ours. It's not generated from us. This is God's work produced by the Spirit in the life of everyone planted by God.

The same God who said, "Let there be light [...] let the earth bring forth fruit trees bearing fruit." It's the same God who calls forth new life in you and in me. And it will bear fruit. So what comes out is evidence of the heart condition. It involves the affections. It's produced by the affections, those things you truly love and those things you truly hate. The affections, which you cannot help but are endemic to your nature. Those affections will produce the speech and the behavior that becomes the telltale sign of those true heart affections. What you really are.

So that said, especially in this context, the mouth is an especially appropriate metaphor. Because the mouth reveals the

heart like no other instrument of the body. Listen to the words. Speech reveals the condition of the heart. So we've seen now the principle stated, illustrated, and demonstrated. Let's consider a final point here. The principle actuated and by actuated, I mean that this principle is to be put into action. Here's how we're going to do that. First make sure that you're truly a Christian, because there's no true fruit without true conversion, without a true new heart.

There are a lot of fake Christians out there, and they're giving true Christianity a really bad name by their association and by all their toleration practice of sin and all their spiritual hypocrisy. So check your own life. Use those lists in Galatians 5, the works of the flesh, the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Honestly, prayerfully before God, even inviting the scrutiny and honest assessment of godly mature Christians like elders. See which list you belong to. The works of the flesh, or the fruit of the spirit.

What is your heart desire? Where do you go when you're in your private moments and your private thoughts? Does your mind and your heart go toward sin and self-centeredness and self-

centered pleasures? Or does it desire the Word of God? Does it desire the practice of righteousness? Does it desire the fellowship of the saints? Are you proclaiming the Gospel, or do you keep silent.

If you examine yourself and you find that you're not a true Christian, repent of your sin because God is eager to forgive. Repent of your sin and embrace the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Recognize that God alone is absolutely holy and that before him, you're a wretched sinner. You deserve his just judgment. You can do nothing to save yourself. You can do nothing to erase your many sins of thought and word and deed before a holy, all-seeing, all-knowing God.

So you must look to the only one who can save you, that is your lawgiver and your judge. He's also your Savior. God sent his one and only Son Jesus Christ to live a perfect sinless, spotless life. And then God sent Jesus to the cross to pay the penalty of death demanded by his holy justice. Jesus went to that cross not for his own sins, but as the perfect and the only substitute to die for the sins of all who will ever believe.



“God made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf in order that we might become the righteousness of God in him.” So if you’ll repent of your sins, turn completely away. If you’ll deny yourself and follow Jesus Christ as your one and your only Lord and master, God will save you of your sins. He’ll forgive you. You’ll be a regenerate person. You’ll have a new nature producing new, good fruit, for the good person out of the good treasure of his heart he and he alone produces good fruit. So make sure you’re converted. Make sure you’re a true Christian, not a phony.

Second way to apply this or to actuate this principle. Apply the principle of fecundity to your practical Christian life. That is to say, don’t be disobedient and refuse to make judgments. Jesus intends that we make good judgments here. First about ourselves, and then about other people. So make sure you’re bearing fruit. Like the love that Jesus commands in verses 27 to 38 that we’ve already covered, that is an other-worldly love that’s only found in Jesus Christ.

I might add, make sure you're producing fruit looking unto Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of your faith. Look at his life and see if his life is being reproduced in your life by the Holy Spirit. Look to your thought life. Look to your desires and your affections and see if they accord with Scripture. As it says in Proverbs 4:23, "keep your heart with all vigilance for from it flows the issues of life."

Remove the beam so that you can see yourself clearly. And then you can see clearly to help your brother and your sister with their specks, or their beams. In the humility of self-examination, we're now able to see clearly so that we can help one another grow in bearing the fruit of a converted life.

Also, as you are looking around, looking at yourself, looking at your neighbor, your brother, your sister. Watch out for false teachers, watch out for fake Christians. False teachers are absolutely destructive to your spiritual growth. They'll lead you down into a hole. They'll lead you into shipwreck because they're riding on a ship that's going to be wrecked. Fake Christians, they're like tares that the enemy has sown among the wheat. They choke out the other plants. They

sully the reputation of genuine Christianity. You'll know them by their fruits.

Watching fruits produced in a life takes time. It doesn't take 10 or 20 or 80 years, it takes maybe months. Watch the growth of fruit. What God plants always grows. It always bears good fruit. So look for good fruit. And judge it as such because out of the good treasure of the regenerate heart good fruit will grow. It must do so because of the God-ordained, God-designed principle of fecundity, essential for our discipleship.