

## INTRODUCTION

I am fascinated with words. Words can often be confusing, however. For instance, you drive on a parkway, but you park in your driveway. There’s no egg in eggplant and no ham in hamburger. Quicksand is actually slow. Boxing rings are actually square. You recite at a play, but you play at a recital. Your nose runs, but your feet smell. Who did this to us? Why is the word abbreviated so long? Why do they call it a building, if it’s already built? Why isn’t the word phonetic spelled like it sounds? If doctors are practicing, why do they charge so much? And who decided to name the building where the airliner departs a terminal? English muffins aren’t from England, French fries don’t come from France and the Caesar salad was invented in Mexico. A guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig. And why is it that writers write, but fingers don’t fing, grocers don’t groce, and hammers don’t ham? If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn’t the plural of booth beeth? One goose, 2 geese. So, is it one moose and 2 meese? After you teach you have taught so does that mean after I preach I have praught? Words can be confusing.

However, there’s nothing confusing about what Jesus has to say. He used simple words and simple stories to teach people. These stories he employed are called parables. There are two things I hope you will remember every time we study a parable: (1) Just as there is a parable in every miracle of Jesus, there is a miracle in every parable. The miracle is that even though the parable is a simple, easy-to-understand story or picture, it has profound implications and truth for each one of us. (2) Also remember studying a parable is like peeling an onion. There are several layers of truth to be studied and obeyed. The parable we have before us today is about fruit trees. This is one of the parables where Jesus does a great favor by explaining exactly what He is trying to teach.

Before we read the text, consider the title of this message. “Can you hear fruit?” We have five senses, and we generally can use four of the five to recognize fruit. For instance, I have a banana in front of me. I can tell it’s a banana by looking at it (sight); If you blindfolded me I could feel it (touch) and identify it; if you blindfolded me and tied my hands behind my back, I could smell it (smell); if you blindfolded me, tied me up and held my nose, I could still taste it (taste) and say, “This is a banana!” But hear it? Come on! Does a banana make any noise? (“Oh, please don’t eat me!”)

Now, while it is true you can’t hear fruit that grows on trees, we are going to learn the very best way to identify fruit coming from people is to listen to them. I hear your fruit—and you hear my fruit. This will all make sense as we study the words of Jesus in Luke 6:43-45: “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briers. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil mans brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”

In this message I want us to examine three words that Jesus uses to teach us something about ourselves.

### **I. *FRUIT*—THE OUTWARD EXPRESSION OF THE INNER NATURE**

Have you ever stopped to consider what fruit is? Fruit doesn't grow by itself; it has to have a tree or a bush. Fruit is actually the outward expression of the inner nature. It's true of both

## 1. Plants and 2. People

My dad graduated from the School of Forestry at Louisiana Tech the year I was born. He worked with trees his entire career. He could identify a tree by its shape, bark or leaves. I didn't inherit that skill. I once thought I was cutting down an oak tree for firewood only to discover later it was a sweet gum tree—the worst firewood! I can't tell an oak tree from a hickory tree from a spaghetti tree. But when I see a tree, and an apple is hanging from a branch, I can usually figure out, “This is an apple tree.” When I see a bunch of bananas hanging from a tree (actually banana trees are bushes) I can easily deduce, “This is a banana plant.” The fruit is the outward expression of the inner nature of a tree.

It's also true of people. In Matthew 7:15 Jesus says, “Watch out for false prophets . . . by their fruit you will recognize them.” In this parable Jesus talks about two kinds of trees—good and bad. He also talks about two kinds of people—good and evil. Of course, there are hundreds of categories into which people can be placed: racially, economically, educationally, rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, doctor, lawyer, Indian chief. We have hundreds of categories but in God's estimation, in the final evaluation, all of mankind can be divided into these two groups: good and bad, those who are saved or lost, those who please God and those who don't—and you can recognize them by their fruit.

A few weeks ago, seven inmates escaped from a maximum-security prison here in Texas. Over the next few weeks they became known as the Texas Seven. You know how they were captured? They bought a used RV and camped out at a park in Colorado Springs. They told the owner and the other residents they were part of a Christian group, traveling and doing mission work. However, when the manager and the other residents observed their behavior, their fruit didn't match up with what they claimed. Their noisy drinking parties and excessive behavior caused the owner and some of the other customers to doubt their story—and they notified the authorities. They should have heeded the words of Jesus, “By their fruit you will recognize them.”

Now you may be confused and ask, “I thought you couldn't tell a book by its cover.” That's just the difference. Jesus is talking about fruit, not a cover people hide behind. Like the Texas Seven, sometimes people's words and actions are only a cover for what is really in their hearts. And many people are wearing a mask.

A few years ago, I was talking to a man I really respected. He was the kind of man who didn't say much, but when he spoke it was to say something important. I was asking him about a certain high-visibility Christian who really seemed to be a go-getter for the Lord. My friend, who had observed that man over a longer period of time, just smiled and used an expression I never heard before. He said, “Aw, He's all hat and no cattle. He's all sizzle and no steak.” He turned out to be right. Some people produce a lot of leaves—cover—but fruit is the true indicator. Your fruit is how you speak and act when nobody is around to observe you. And just as a thorn bush doesn't produce figs or a briar bush produce grapes, a person whose nature is not Christ-dominated

won't be produce Christ-like fruit. When a person isn't reflecting good fruit, it reveals a heart problem.

## II. HEART—YOUR MORAL AND SPIRITUAL “CONTROL CENTER”

Jesus says some people have good “stored up” in their hearts and some have evil things “stored up” in their hearts. The word “heart” is translated from the Greek word *kardia*, from which we get our English word cardiac. This word *heart* is used 955 times in the Bible. In the Bible, *kardia* doesn't mean the fist-sized pump in your chest pumping blood to carry oxygen and nutrients to the cells in your body. It is used to describe what we would call the “control center” of your life. It could be called your “mind” or your “personality.” We still have that meaning when we talk about “loving someone with all your heart” or when we say, “our heart really isn't in it.” Let's learn about our heart. First,

### 1. We begin with a bad heart

Did you hear about the doctor who told his patient, “You have a very rare disease.” The patient said, “What's so rare about it?” The doctor said, “It's fully covered by your health insurance.” That is pretty rare! But we have a heart problem that isn't rare, it's common to each of us. When we were born, we inherited a tendency to sin. Have you ever noticed you don't have to teach a little child to lie or steal or be selfish? It comes with the package! In theology this is called the doctrine of total depravity. In other words, until we are redeemed and forgiven, we are completely and totally depraved and sinful in our natural condition. You may be aware this is an ongoing sociological and psychological debate. Secular humanism, for instance, teaches that a person is basically good and if you just provide the right kind of education and environment, goodness will always surface. I disagree. The Bible teaches that each of us is rotten to the core. We have a sinful heart. As you heard before: The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart. The Bible says, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? ‘I, the Lord, search the heart and examine the mind . . .’” Jeremiah 17:9-10. Can it be stated any clearer? In our natural state, our heart is wicked and deceitful. Your heart will even deceive you—it's called self-deception. If you are not a Christian, you are at this moment saying to yourself, “He's wrong, I'm basically a good person at heart.” Who is telling you that? Your wicked sinful heart. Are you going to believe it or the word of God?

I remember trying to help a battered woman years ago in another church. Her husband was an alcoholic who was a mean drunk; he beat his wife. I can remember this dear woman weeping, even with the bruises evident on her cheeks. She would cry and say, “But Joe's a good man at heart.” I had to say, “I'm sorry, ma'am, but you are wrong. That's the problem, he is *not* a good man at heart. That's why he drinks and beats you—he has a heart problem.” I've heard the parents of rebellious teenagers weep after their child has committed some crime and I've heard them say something like, “Johnny's a good boy at heart.” Wrong. Every person has this sinful, depraved heart and we need to admit it.

You see, you aren't a liar because you lie; you lie because you are a liar. You aren't a thief because you steal; you steal because you are a thief. We inherited this terrible propensity to sin. Like the verse of that old hymn says, “Prone to wander Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I

love. Here's my heart, Oh, take and seal it. Seal it for thy courts above." ("Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing", Robert Robinson)

You can never become a Christian until you make this basic confession: I admit I am a sinner, I was born a sinner, but I can't blame by ancestors, I am also a sinner by choice. I admit I have a rotten heart. But, sadly, some people are just too proud to admit it. I fear pride may be the #1 sin that keeps people out of heaven.

## **2. We can't repair our sinful heart**

When you admit you have a bad heart, your first inclination is to try to fix it. Save yourself a lot of trouble. Did you notice Jeremiah tells us the human heart is "beyond cure?" Some people try to just "do better" and "be better." In truth,

### **We need a:**

#### **(a) Heart transplant**

Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the thought of doctors removing a human heart and placing it in another person was only the stuff of science fiction. But now there are many people within our own church who have been the recipients of a heart transplant. Thousands of years before it ever happened in a hospital, God spoke of it.

Do you know what salvation really is? It's when God comes and removes your old, sinful heart and gives you a totally new heart—a new nature. The prophet Ezekiel prophesied this in beautiful words in 36:26, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees."

Before you get this new heart, it is impossible to obey God and to please Him. It's like your heart is made of stone. But when He puts His Holy Spirit into your heart, you are regenerated, made alive. And you will find He even places the desire there for you to obey Him. Have you had a heart transplant? If you haven't, it's impossible for you to produce godly fruit, because you still have an old sinful, human nature dominating.

In addition to a heart transplant, you also need a

#### **(b) New resident**

Your original heart was full of selfish "I." Your own personal desires ruled your heart. When you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit comes to take up residence in your heart. The Holy Spirit never bears witness of Himself; instead He always magnifies Christ. Notice what the Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:16-17, "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power though his Spirit in your inner being (heart), so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." Some of the best theology you'll ever learn comes from the hymns we sing. Since I was a child, I have appreciated the truth in the chorus of the great hymn, "He Lives":

“He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today  
He walks with me and talks with me along life’s narrow way  
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart  
You ask me how I know He lives –  
He lives within my heart.” (Words by Alfred Ackley)

You can’t *feel* Jesus in your heart; He lives there by faith.

But in order to have the right kind of heart, you must understand that Jesus doesn’t just want to reside in your heart, He wants to rule in your heart. He came to live in your heart so He could be your Lord, your ruler. Look at the word “resident.” Put a “P” at the beginning of it. Jesus not only wants to be the royal resident of your heart, He desires and deserves to be President or ruler of your heart.

So, what is the condition of your heart? Jesus said we “store up” things in our hearts. The best way to know what is in your heart is to consider the fruit your life is producing. In the last sentence of this passage Jesus makes an amazing observation. He says the best way to know what is overflowing a person’s heart is to listen to what comes out of his mouth. That leads us to our final topic today.

### **III. MOUTH—YOUR WORDS REVEAL YOUR HEART’S OVERFLOW**

We often say, “Actions speak louder than words.” But in this instance, Jesus is saying the best way to inspect spiritual fruit is to listen to what comes out of a person’s mouth. That’s why I entitled this message “Do You Hear the Fruit?” You can see, touch, taste, and smell fruit but Jesus said the best fruit indicator is what you *hear*.

Please don’t be offended by this next statement but “you are full of it.” Full of what? Well, everyone is full of something. Do you want to know how to tell what a person is full of? Just listen to what they talk about. A person will always spend the most time talking about the topic that fills his heart. Jesus said it this way, “For out of the overflow of his heart, his mouth speaks.” You may not even know yourself what is filling your heart, just consider what comes out of your mouth.

Most of us underestimate the awesome importance of the words we speak. In Matthew 12:36–37 Jesus uttered this powerful warning about our words, “But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

This is true personally and it also becomes true as a nation. It is both a symptom and a cause of our national moral depravity that crude profanity has become the “normal” way to speak today. I haven’t seen an XFL game yet but I understand they have put microphones on the players. The producers had to build in a 4-second delay so they could “bleep” out the expletives. I’ve been told about every tenth word is “bleeped out.” Have you ever wished that God would do that in real life? Wouldn’t it be a nicer world if He would “bleep out” every word of profanity? Some people wouldn’t have much to say.

Now think about it. Every time a person utters a vile expletive, they are just revealing what is filling their heart. Every time you hear someone at work, on TV, or at school utter a four-letter word descriptive of cow manure, you can be certain that person's heart is full of that very thing. Every time you open your mouth, you are inviting people to look into your heart, into your mind.

Jesus is telling us that just as different trees produce different kinds of fruit, people are the same way. You can tell them by their fruit. But there really is a danger when we become over-zealous fruit inspectors of others. We run the risk of making the mistake Jesus spoke of in the preceding verses. If we aren't careful we will be looking at a speck in our brother's eye, when there is a plank in our own eye. So based upon what we've learned so far in this passage, I invite each of you to conduct a

### **PERSONAL FRUIT INSPECTION:**

Will you take a moment and ask yourself the following three questions?

#### **1. What kind of fruit comes from my lips?**

What do the words you speak say about your spiritual fruit? If I could follow you around for 24 hours (and you didn't know I was there) what would I learn about you? I really don't want to do that, because I have enough challenge guarding what I say.

I grew up spending a lot of time with my dad. We went hunting and fishing together—I wanted to be just like him. I distinctly remember standing in front of my dresser when I was in the first or second grade. The drawer was stuck and I was getting frustrated. I was shaking the whole dresser trying to get it open when my mother came in and asked me what was wrong. I said, "I can't get this d— drawer open!" Needless to say, she was shocked. She took me in the bathroom and fed me a soap sandwich—I literally had to wash out my mouth with soap. She said, "Where did you learn to talk like that?" I said, "from Daddy." My mother marched out of the bathroom. I never heard what she told my dad, but I think it was worse than a soap sandwich! I never heard my dad use profanity around me again. Although there was a period in high school when I used profanity, I stopped using that kind of language several years before God called me to preach. The guys I play golf with will testify I don't use profanity, but after I three-putt I get so steamed that where I spit the grass won't grow!

People are listening to what you say and little ears are paying a lot of attention to your words. My mother made my wash my mouth out but a dirty mouth is only an indication of a dirty heart. I needed to wash my heart out and a couple of years later; Jesus did just that. He didn't use soap to clean out my heart, He used His precious blood.

#### **2. What am I feeding my heart (mind)?**

Jesus spoke about goodness that is "stored up" in a person's heart. He also spoke of evil stored up in a human heart. If you feed your mind sinful, filthy input, that's exactly what will come out. It's the old computer axiom that says, "Garbage in, garbage out."

If you feed your mind and heart good things like the Word of God, Bible teaching, and praise music, good things will be reflected in your speech and actions. But if you feed your mind the wrong thing, your actions and speech will be polluted.

It's possible to look nice and respectable on the outside, but have evil lurking within. Jesus compared these religious hypocrites to whitewashed graves. On the outside, they were shiny and clean, but on the inside there was only rotteness and decay. It's scary but a person may look totally normal on the surface, and underneath their facade there is a wicked heart. I recently read a book by Anne Rule entitled *The Stranger Beside Me*. It was a book about her co-worker Ted Bundy. To most people, he appeared to be a bright, pleasant young man. But he possessed a wicked heart that led him to brutally murder at least 15 young women. A few days before he was executed, Bundy granted an interview to Dr. James Dobson. Ted Bundy admitted he had been hooked on pornography since he was a teenager. For years, He had been feeding his mind and heart the wrong thing.

In Romans 7, Paul speaks of the two conflicting natures living within a Christian. Even after Jesus comes to take up residence in your heart through the Holy Spirit, your old selfish nature is still present. Your sinful nature will continually try to reclaim the throne of your heart to try to control your life according to your sinful desires. That's why you must constantly keep self-crucified and surrender to Jesus as your Lord. Several years ago, a man described this struggle to his pastor. He said, "It is as if there are two dogs in my heart. They are constantly fighting. One dog is trying lead me to do wrong, and the other dog is trying to lead me to do what is right." The pastor said, "Which dog wins the fight?" The man wisely replied, "the one that I feed the most."

Most people are careful about what they feed their stomachs. If I offered you a clump of mud to eat, you'd say, "Ugh! No way." If I offered you poison to drink, I hope you would refuse it. I wish we were all more discriminating about what we feed our hearts and minds. Jesus said it's not what goes into your mouth that defiles you; it's what resides in your heart and comes out of your mouth that defiles you. You feed your heart by what you read, what you watch, and by what you hear. Are you are reading anything that feeds your sinful nature? What about the movies, videos, and TV shows you are watching; do they help you store up good in your heart—or are you just pouring garbage into your heart and mind? What kind of music are you listening to? Which nature does it feed?

### **3. What do I desire to overflow from my heart?**

What you talk about the most is generally a precise indication of what is filling your heart. Remember, each of us is full of something. What is for you? It doesn't have to be something evil; it may be something as seemingly innocent as your hobby. Do you talk about golf, fishing, or hunting most of the time? Are you a fan of a sports team and that's what you talk about the most? Is it your job? Is that what you talk about the most? Shopping? Traveling? Your grandkids? The list is endless.

Here's the truth: Nothing will ever satisfy your soul except Jesus. Don't look for your job to fulfill your deepest needs. Don't look for your hobby, or even your marriage or family to satisfy your soul. Only Jesus can satisfy your soul.

Can you honestly say you want Jesus to fill and overflow your heart? At one time, David was so full of God he said it this way, "You anoint my head (mind) with oil; my cup runs over." (Psalm 23:5)

Is your heart full of Jesus? Before the days of indoor plumbing, many people used wells to provide their water. Several generations ago, farms used to have open wells surrounded by stone walls with covers to keep debris out. In order to get water, a bucket was lowered into the well. I never used a well, but I can remember visiting my great Uncle Bill's farm. My dad took me out and showed me the well they used before they got indoor plumbing. He told me sometimes he had to go out when it was pitch dark and draw water from it. He would drop the bucket into the well and often pulled it up before it was full. His aunt taught him to listen carefully—when he heard the bucket spilling over, he knew it was full.

That's a great way to tell when your heart is full, too. The best way to know Jesus is filling your heart is when your mouth expresses Jesus' name and Jesus' words. I'm not talking about some empty temporary profession. I'm talking about being so in love with Jesus that He fills your heart to the point where you talk about Him naturally and consistently. There used to be an expression that went, "What's down in the well will come up in the bucket." That's what Jesus is saying about your mouth. Whatever is down in the well of your heart is going to come out through the bucket of your mouth.

## CONCLUSION

Jesus said you can identify a tree by its fruit. He said you can identify a person by the fruit of their lips. Your mouth is going to reveal the things you store up in your heart. That's why it's important to feed and fill your heart with the good things of God. Our ultimate goal as Christians is to be so surrendered to the life of Jesus within our hearts our personality reflects the "fruit of the Spirit" found in Galatians 5:22. That fruit is: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control. When those are the qualities of your personality you *know* Christ is controlling your heart. Just before the list of the nine beautiful fruits of the Spirit, Paul catalogs some of the bitter, wicked fruit coming from an evil heart. They include, "sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft (*pharmakia*), hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like." (Galatians 5:19-21) Which of those two fruit lists describes your life? Which set of fruit do you wish to characterize your life? Then feed your heart until it is filled to overflowing with Jesus!

## OUTLINE

### I. FRUIT—THE OUTWARD EXPRESSION OF THE INNER NATURE

#### 1. Plants and 2. People

“Watch out for false prophets ... By their fruit you will recognize them ... ” – *Matthew 7:15-16*

### II. HEART—YOUR MORAL AND SPIRITUAL “CONTROL CENTER”

#### 1. We begin with a bad heart

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? “I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind ... ” *Jeremiah 17:9-10*

#### 2. We can't repair our sinful heart – we need a:

##### a. Heart transplant

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees...” *Ezekiel 36:26-27*

##### b. New resident

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith ... ” *Ephesians 3:16-17*

### III. MOUTH—YOUR WORDS REVEAL YOUR HEART'S OVERFLOW

“But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” *Matthew 12:36-37*

#### PERSONAL FRUIT INSPECTION:

1. What kind of fruit comes from my lips?
2. What am I feeding my heart (mind)?
3. What do I desire to overflow from my heart?



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes