

DISCIPLESHIP

Today's reading: Matthew 7:15-29

Two trees

¹⁵ 'Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will know them by their fruits.

1. What does "good fruit" illustrate here? Is this similar to, or different from its use in today's Gospel (John 15)?
2. What will distinguish false from authentic prophets or trees?
3. Who are 'them' (v20)?
4. Explain how we will 'know them'? Why might this be important?

Two claims

²¹ 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord", will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?" ²³ Then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers."

1. Who will enter 'the kingdom of heaven'?
2. What or where is 'the kingdom of heaven'? Is it different from 'the kingdom of God'?
3. What claims does Jesus reject? Why?
4. What is Jesus' problem with prophesying, casting out demons, and acting powerfully in his name?

Two builders

²⁴ 'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. ²⁵ The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. ²⁶ And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!'

1. In the first simile explain what is similar to the wise man?
2. Is there another Bible verse(s) encouraging disciples to act wisely?
3. How is the quality of the buildings revealed?
4. How would you translate the illustrations of these two buildings into discipleship qualities?

Two teachings

²⁸ Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, ²⁹ for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

1. What did people appreciate about the way Jesus taught?
2. What style of teaching were people accustomed to?

Application:

How does this passage, Matthew 7:15-29, help us to confidently describe authentic discipleship?