

## **The Danger of Following the Wrong Spiritual Teacher**

Luke 6:39-45

42-89

This morning as we open the Word of God, we return to Luke 6:39-45, is our text this morning. I'll be reading that in a few moments. Luke 6:39-45.

The Grace Today says that I'll be speaking on kingdom love, but I already finished that last week and this is a new subject. I've entitled it "The Danger of Following the Wrong Spiritual Teacher." The Danger of Following the Wrong Spiritual Teacher. That is the theme of what Jesus teaches in these verses.

Now we in America have been living under some serious warnings lately. It seems as though every day the news media dispenses to us another set of warnings and how we might somehow find a path of safety in a terrorist-filled environment. We as individuals, we as a nation, have been put on the highest alert. We're told, because there is a severe and deadly danger existing and it threatens us in the most unexpected ways.

Death can come, it has for many, and it can come in those places we have learned to trust as safe places: Our work place, an airplane, a post office, an envelope in the mail, our food, our water, our bridges, the air we breathe so unconsciously. We're now told to be alert because all those safe places could become deadly. The enemy who kills is hidden in our safe places. Because of that, the enemy is extremely dangerous.

Terrorists who can kill your body are hidden in the least expected locations. And this produces a new fear, a new anxiety, a new paranoia, a new kind of trepidation that we all live with. What makes them so deadly is that their presence is so unexpected. They appear in environments we have learned to trust.

And that reality is analogous to another reality, even more frightening and far more dangerous and far more deadly: Religious terrorists. And they are hidden in our safe places: Churches, mosques, cathedrals. And they masquerade as teachers, preachers, priests, clerics, imams, gurus, rabbis, theologians, bishops, apostles, cardinals, popes. Their desire is to make us feel safe in those environments. But the truth of the matter is these are religious terrorists whose deadly lies are hidden under superficial morality, under religious ceremony, and they are more destructive than terrorists who can kill the body, because their kind of terrorism destroys the soul forever. They kill people eternally.

People are doing everything they can within reason, and sometimes even beyond reason, to protect themselves from terrorists: Buying gas masks, etc. Now, we have tried to protect ourselves in modern times from criminals. We have a new sense of security in the modern era that we didn't have

a few decades ago in America. We're afraid of not just vandals, but we're afraid of criminals, and so we all have security systems in our houses, and in our business places, and in our cars.

Physical well being and physical safety is threatened all around us. We've done everything we could to guard against that, but now we have something new with this terrorism because we don't know where to set up the security system, because they come to us in our safe places. But we're working hard to figure out how to protect ourselves from these deadly terrorists.

But, on the other hand, what are we doing to protect our minds? What are we doing to protect our souls from spiritual terrorists? Witless people, sometimes well-intentioned, float blithely and benignly through life inhaling religious anthrax. It's everywhere in the atmosphere and it's eternally killing millions. It comes in places that are apparently safe, religious places.

Now the Bible is a book filled with warnings about this literally by the hundreds. The Bible warns us about lies, religious lies, and religious liars, deceivers, charlatans, frauds, who lead people into divine judgment. It's as simple as this. There is truth from God that saves the soul from judgment, and there are lies that bring the soul into judgment. Wrong spiritual teaching, false religion, is the most lethal of all terrorist weapons.

People sit in a church, cathedral, a mosque, some religious environment, breathing in that spiritual anthrax and feeling safe. From the standpoint of what the Bible says, there would be no way to over emphasize the danger of following the wrong spiritual teacher. That can't be overstated. So be warned, be alert, be vigilant, protect your mind and your soul, and avoid places already known to be contaminated.

This is what Jesus is talking about in this passage. So let's read it. Verse 39, "He also spoke a parable to them: 'A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone after, he has been fully trained will be like his teacher. And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take out the speck that is 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, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

"For there is no good tree that produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil *man* out of the evil *treasure* brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.' "

Now, having listened to me read that, you're asking yourself, "How in the world does that connect with what you just said?" And to be honest with you, I'm frankly amazed at the difficulty that commentators have in sorting out what I think is a very simple and direct message from the Lord here. Many, many commentators say it's nearly impossible to figure out why Jesus connected these proverbs, these axioms, these self-evident truisms together. But it shouldn't be that difficult.

It's absolutely crystal clear to me in reading those that Jesus is discussing the danger of following the wrong spiritual teacher. And the point that Jesus is making is you have to make a choice, and you

better choose carefully who you follow, because everything in time and eternity is at stake.

The options were clear on that day on the hillside in Galilee when Jesus was giving this sermon on the mount, as it is called. And what Jesus is saying here is you have leaders in your nation: Pharisees, scribes, priests, the spiritual establishment of Judaism, and you have Me, and you have to choose between us. They are spiritually deadly and I give life. That is clearly the issue in this sermon because the closing illustration in verse 46, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not what I say? Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts upon them, I will show you whom he is like."

In other words, the point is Jesus is saying, "You need to hear and obey Me, not them. If you hear and obey Me, you're like a house that stands when the judgment comes. If you listen to them, you're like a house that falls when the judgment comes." You have to make a choice. The wrong choice is deadly. Jesus is drawing a line, and He is saying, "You must turn from your former leaders and follow Me."

So that points up the question what spiritual teacher are you following? Mohammed? Ghandi? Joseph Smith? Deepak Chopra, Rabbi Kushner? L. Ron Hubbard? A myriad of others who masquerade as if they are messengers of the truth and are purveyors of deceiving lies that damn men's souls. They are the spiritual terrorists of the world. They hide in the safe churches of liberal Christian theology, sometimes they hide in the Charismatic movement. They hide in the cults. They hide in the world religions. And sometimes they create their own little safe space. They say they are truth teachers who will lead you to God.

That was the question Jesus was posing on the mountain that day, because He had a lot of disciples, as we remember, hundreds if not thousands of them collected around Him. Now "disciple" is a word that means "student," or "learner." It doesn't say anything about commitment. It doesn't say anything about faith. It doesn't say anything about devotion or worship. It's just about learning.

And so here was this mass of humanity following Jesus in kind of a 24/7 fashion all the time, watching Him heal people and demonstrate His power over the physical world, watching Him cast demons out of people, demonstrate His power over the spiritual world, listening to Him speak in profundity with which they had never been familiar. And they were fascinated and attracted to Jesus.

But Jesus is saying to them, "All right, you have to make a choice. Are you going to follow your former spiritual leaders or are you going to follow Me totally? It's not enough to just call Me 'Lord,' you have to do what I say or you're going to crash in the judgment."

And so, this sermon that Jesus preached is to a mixed multitude, if you will, of disciples who were students not necessarily committed yet to Christ. Some were, many were not. Perhaps most were undecided as to the issue of salvation or saving faith in Christ. In fact, the group ran on a spectrum from the curious to the convinced, from the fascinated to the dedicated, from the doubters to the faithful, from the ignorant to the understanding, from skepticism to dedication, from amazement to worship, and all in between those poles. They were all over the place. And since Jesus began His ministry, He is telling people, "You have to make a choice." And here He points up the danger of making the wrong one.

And it's still that way today. There are people today who are curious about Jesus, who are fascinated with Jesus, who know some things about Him, who are amazed by Jesus, who feel warm feelings toward Jesus, who like what He stood for, and so forth. All throughout human history since Jesus came into the world He has collected around Him people in all times and all places who have some positive attitude toward Him, but not necessarily salvation.

All across humanity people respect Jesus. They are, to one degree or another, interested in Him, amazed, if you will, at Him. And Jesus is still giving the same message today, it's saying, "That's not enough. You must come to Me fully, totally, wholly, to the exclusion of all other religious teachers."

That's essentially what He was preaching all through His earthly ministry. And in the land of Israel at that time there was only one group of religious teachers, that was the Pharisees, the scribes, the rabbis who made up Judaism. Jesus all the way along is calling people to stop following them and follow Him because He had the true message and they didn't.

Now, just to give you a little bit of background before we look at these verses in detail, you're going to be fascinated with what they say. The subject of the sermon is true discipleship. And Jesus is defining a true disciple. You remember, first of all, in verses 20 to 26 He defined a true disciple as a repentant, remember that? Somebody who sees his own sin, and realizes he's poor, and hungry, and sad, and alienated. And so we've already looked at the fact that a true disciple of Christ is overwhelmed with his own sin, not overwhelmed with his own righteousness. That was true of the Pharisees and scribes and those who followed them. They were thrilled with their own righteousness. But a true kingdom disciple is in despair over his sinfulness. So the first characteristic, then, of a true disciple is repentance.

The second one is love. And we looked at that, didn't we, in verses 27 to 38? An unusual supernatural ability to love enemies, to love those that hate you, to love those who persecute you, to love them with an evangelistic love, a love that has no human explanation. And what it does is demonstrate the work of God in the heart. Repentance demonstrates the initial work of God in the heart, and love demonstrates the ongoing work of God in the heart. First, the Spirit of God produces repentance, and then when conversion comes, a new love is planted in the heart by that regenerating work.

So we've already learned, then, that if you are to be a true disciple, you see yourself as wretched and sinful, and you desperately need forgiveness, and you come with a penitent heart to God, and when you come like that, and embrace the truth, God changes your heart, regenerates you, takes out your old heart, gives you a new heart, puts the Spirit within you, and you can love like no one else can love. You can love your enemies.

Now, the third component that defines a true disciple is submission to the lordship of Christ. Submission to the lordship of Christ. The true Christian makes a break from false teachers. Disciples are repenters of sin. Disciples are lovers of enemies. And disciples, we're going to find out here, are followers of the true Christ, the true Lord. And our Lord makes this point in a most amazing way. He does it in a negative sense by showing the danger of false spiritual teachers.

In fact, what I just read you is four little proverbs, or four parables, *parabolē*. You think of a parable, you think of a long story, a protracted story. But a parable can be one line. It can be synonymous

with an analogy, an illustration, a proverb. You have in the Gospel of Luke in a number of places, chapter 12 and several other places further on, parables that are prolonged. You also have parables that are one brief sentence, such as in 4:23, 5:36. And here you have very brief pithy little parables, or proverbs, or axioms, truisms, self-evident truths.

And what they demonstrate is how important it is to follow Christ, how important it is to turn from false spiritual teachers. And in that environment, of course, that would be the Jewish religious establishment. But it would be truly applicable in any environment, as you will see.

Now, there are four dangers in following a false teacher, four things that make them deadly. Number one, they are blind. They are blind. That is, they are without veracity. They are without truth. Let's look at verse 39. "He also spoke a parable to them: 'A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit?'" Now that's what we call an axiom. An axiom is a statement that needs no proof because it is self-evident. That is self-evident. A blind man can't guide a blind man. They'll both end up in the pit.

Blind people were all over the land of Israel at the time of Jesus. You know from following His ministry how many of them He healed. Blindness was a major problem in the ancient times. I'm not going to go into all kinds of detail about that. It was a serious problem, some of it occurring even at the time of birth. There were lots of blind people. So the people understood that. They were used to seeing blind people, many of them ending up as beggars, as we note in the gospel accounts. One great story in John 9 is about a blind man that Jesus healed.

And also there were a lot of pits. There were unfenced quarries. There were crevasses in rugged rocky areas of Palestine. There were precipices along the sides of roads. I've been on some roads that were fairly frightening and trails in those days would have been equally so.

Also, there was a water shortage and there were many wells and some common point of digging wells here and there made a tremendous danger potential because people didn't always fill up the wells that were unsuccessful or that dried up, and open dry wells were a problem and blind people could easily fall into them to their own death. And that's what Jesus is talking about.

The word for "pit," *bothunon*, isn't referring to a shallow ditch. I think sometimes it's been translated that way. It's a deadly dive into a deep pit, and probably fits the dry well picture better than anything. A blind person leading another blind person through an area where there were dry wells is no help. That's not helpful, extremely dangerous.

The spiritual point is very simple. Follow a leader who doesn't know the way to God's kingdom and you're not going to end up there. In fact, you follow a blind guide, someone who doesn't know God, and doesn't know the way to God, and doesn't know the path to salvation and you will end up in hell. That's the pit. You better choose very carefully what religious teacher you follow.

Blindness is used metaphorically, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, for being void of truth, for not having any spiritual sight, or insight. Isaiah 29:10, Isaiah 44:18, Jeremiah 5:21, many other passages. Psalm 82:5 says, "The wicked don't know, nor do they understand; they walk about in darkness;" that's a categorical description. Second Corinthians 4:4, "The god of this world has blinded their minds." People who don't know God are blind to truth and if you follow them, you're

going to end up in the pit.

In particular, Jesus is referring to the Pharisees and the scribes, the spiritual religious leaders of Israel. They were leading people into the eternal pit. Turn back to Matthew chapter 15. Let me show you this, because Jesus used kind of language on a number of occasions and specifically applies it to these religious leaders. Matthew 15:12, "The disciples came and they said to Him, 'Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?' " Do You know that You're at odds with the Pharisees? Do You know You're in conflict with the Pharisees? You're teaching things that offend them? And Jesus, of course, was in direct conflict with them all the time because they didn't know the truth and He proclaimed the truth.

"But He answered and said, 'Every plant which My heavenly Father didn't plant shall be rooted up.' " What He's saying is God didn't plant them. And then He says in verse 14, "Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit." There Jesus says it is the Pharisees who are the blind guides, the religious leaders.

Turn to Matthew 23, in this potent malediction, this diatribe against the Pharisees and the scribes in Matthew 23, the language of Jesus is as strong as it is anywhere in the New Testament. In verse 13, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees." Why? "Because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in." If you're blind and you can't find it, then those who follow you can't find it either. This is the deadliest of the spiritual terrorists.

Verse 15 He says, "You travel around on sea and land to make a proselyte;" You want followers to follow you as the spiritual teacher. "And when he becomes one - " of your proselytes " - you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves." You just make him worse. You damn him to a greater damnation.

Most people, you know, in sort of a benign attitude think that the religious people are doing good in the world. They're spiritual terrorists. They're destroying the souls of people in safe places, places that appear safe. You can drive down Roscoe Boulevard around the San Fernando Valley and you can find some of them, where the people go in every weekend and breathe spiritual anthrax.

They're just making twice as much sons of hell. They don't know the way and they can't show the way to anybody else. Verse 24, He says, "You blind guides ... Woe to you scribes and Pharisees," verse 25. Verse 26, "You blind Pharisee." Repeatedly, He identifies the blind guides as the establishment, the religious leaders. Just being a religious leader is not some noble calling. If you don't represent the truth, you are spiritual terrorists.

On the other hand, Jesus is "the way, the truth and the life, and no man comes unto the Father but by Him." Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me shall not walk in darkness." Jesus said in Luke 4:18, "I've come to give sight to the blind." Jesus is the way. Jesus is the light. Jesus has the sight. He knows God. He knows the way to God. He knows the truth of God and He can lead you there. But He's the only one.

"Neither is there salvation in any other, there's no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." So any other person advocating any other path to God is leading

people to hell. So be careful who you choose as your spiritual teacher, because if your spiritual teacher is blind, you're going to both end up in the pit.

The first danger is, they are blind. Second danger, they are earthly. Not only do they lack veracity, truth, they lack deity. They're not of God. And the point is made - back to Luke 6 - the point is made in another very pithy statement that Jesus used a lot, verse 40. "The pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher."

Now Jesus said that in a lot of places. He said it in Matthew 10:24. He said it in John 13:16. He said it in John 15:20. This is the statement that He used. It may have been a proverbial statement. These may have been in the common vernacular of the people. He just may have been borrowing things that they often said. But it's a simple principle. A pupil can't rise above his teacher. All you can know is what you've been told. You can't get above him. Where your teacher stops, you stop, and whatever your teacher's limits are, those are your limits. And whatever your teacher's errors are, those become your errors. Unless you go to another teacher, you can't rise above the teacher you choose. You can't know more than you have been taught. So where your teacher stops, you stop, Jesus said.

That's the frightening thing here, folks. Do you understand? You follow the wrong guy and you can't get past him. So if he doesn't know the way to God, if he doesn't know the truth of God, if he doesn't know the gospel, the way of salvation, you won't, either. If you know more than your teacher, you're the teacher. The point is that any teacher can only tell you what he knows, and if he doesn't know the truth, then you're not going to know it, either.

In fact, look what he says, "Everyone after he has been *katartizō*, fully trained, will only be like his teacher." I mean, if you literally imbibe everything your teacher gives you, you're going to be just like him. That's the max you can do. You can't say, "I'm going to learn from him so I can know more than he knows." You can't do that. It's self-evident. You can only know what he tells you. If your teacher doesn't know the truth, you're not going to know it, either. Hosea put it this way, "Like people, like priest."

Now in the day of Jesus, teachers taught orally, and they taught in that same kind of 24/7 pattern where followers kind of grouped around them and moved through life with them. They weren't writing books. They were just speaking orally off life situations, really a good way to mentor people. And they would go around, and they would take the issues of life, the common experiences of life, and they would infuse those with the truth they wanted to teach, and their disciples would trail around after them. That was pretty much the way of teaching up until almost modern times, constantly teaching off of personal life situations. So the teacher reproduced himself in a very dramatic way, and the best thing that he could do would be fully train a guy, and when he fully trained him, he would be just like he was. And most people in ancient times followed one teacher, their chosen mentor.

So be careful because you're never going to get higher than your teacher. Choose who you want to be like because if the teaching is complete, that's all you'll ever be. If you're going to choose a spiritual guru, you'll never go beyond him. I often ask this question to parents who can't decide whether they should send their young person to The Master's College or to some secular university. It's a simple question. Who do you want your child to be like? Because when he's done with the teaching, he's going to be like whoever taught him. And if the teacher doesn't know God and the

teacher doesn't know the truth, then you're never going to know it either.

All of these millions of people in Islam, millions of people in Buddhism, Hinduism, millions of people in aberrant forms of Christianity, millions of people in cults all over the world following dutifully their leaders who don't know the truth. And at best, they just become like them. They'll be judged, along with all their pupils.

On the other hand, if you follow Jesus, you can become like Him. First John 3:2. Someday, "when we see Him as He is, we will be - " what? " - like Him," 1 John 3. But that's because He is deity. But all these other teachers are earthy, at best. I suppose you could say, demonic, or at worst, demonic. If your teacher is earthy, worldly, human; if it's just human wisdom, if it's just manmade or demon-inspired religion, philosophy, ethics, and they don't know God, in the end you won't know Him, either, and it will just be earthly. Beware of spiritual terrorists who kill your soul by blindness and earthliness.

Thirdly, Jesus said there's a third danger, "They are hypocrites." They are hypocrites. This is so well crafted, this part of His message. These are the critical issues. They are hypocrites. They lack veracity or truth. They lack deity. They're not connected to God. And they lack integrity. They are hypocrites.

And this is actually funny. I know Jesus had a sense of humor. I know that because I just look at people, and I know He had a sense of humor because He made them. And we're just so funny. I know Jesus uses a little humor here. In fact, it's almost comical what He says. Verse 41 and 42, "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or 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 your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye."

Here's the problem false teachers have. They can't fix you because they can't fix themselves. They can't solve your problem because they've got a massive one of their own. This is really very - it's cartoonish. The word "speck," *karphos*, means "a chip." This is not a tiny little piece of sand like you get in your eye. This would be like a wood chip or a piece of chaff or straw, serious problem in your eye.

And along comes this spiritual leader, "Let me bring virtue into your life. Let me bring understanding into your life. Let me lead you to God." And he's going to look in there and find the little things that are wrong and take them out. The problem is, he's got a *dokos* in his eye. What's that? That is the main beam in a building. I mean, just make the cartoon in your mind, this is absurd. This guy can't even get close enough to the person he's looking at because he's got a beam coming out of his eye. How is he going to find what's in there and solve that guy's problem? He can't do that, it's absurdity.

He's trying to deal with your sin and he's got the most massive of all sins, which is a carefully crafted belief in his own righteousness, his own self-righteousness, which is the sin of all sins. The picture really is absurd. It's absolutely bizarre. Nobody with a main beam in a building sticking out of their eye is going to get close enough to see anything in anybody else's eye, and that's what Jesus wants to portray is absurdity. And the spiritual point is simple. You can't deal with what's wrong in somebody else's life when yours is far worse.

By the way, Matthew records this same illustration in 7:3-5 and makes the same emphasis. Religious teachers, they'll say, "Well, I want to give you morality and virtue. We want to bring goodness into your life, and let me here take a look at what's wrong in your life, and let me fix you a little bit." And they can't do that. False religion can't fix itself. They wear their garb. They wear their religious robes, their ceremonial robes. They talk in their mellow tones.

They appear to be good and compassionate, and they want to fix your life. They can't do it because they can't get the beam out of their own life because false religion can't restrain their own wretchedness. It can't restrain their own flesh. And so, in order to overcome it, they've created a self-deception that they are self-righteous. They have gained their own righteousness by their own religious, moral efforts. And this puts a massive log in their eye that makes it impossible for them to help you.

Let me tell you how simple it is. Nobody who thinks he's righteous can help a sinner. And this is exactly what the Pharisees did. Go back to verse 24 to 26 in this sermon. Who are the rich? Who are the well-fed? Who are the laughing? Who are the people about whom all men were speaking well? Those were the Pharisees, and the religious leaders, and they had it all made. They were rich, and they were satisfied, and they were content, and happy, and respected. And Jesus said, "Curse you, curse you, curse you. Woe, woe, woe."

Turn to Matthew 23 again. In that same passage I read earlier this issue of hypocrisy comes up again in verse 13. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." Verse 14, "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." Verse 15, "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." And it just keeps going. Verse 23, "Hypocrites." Verse 25, "Hypocrites." Verse 27, "Hypocrites." And He defines it, verse 25, "You clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside full of robbery and self-indulgence. First clean the inside of the cup and the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean." Verse 27, "You are whitewashed like a tomb on the outside, appearing beautiful, inside full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." In verse 28, "Inwardly full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." I mean, that's hypocrisy. They're wretched on the inside.

You see, false religion can't clean their dirty heart, and so they have a facade of virtue, and a facade of morality, and a facade of holiness. And they may not be full of vice. They may exchange vice for something worse. You know what's worse than vice? Self-styled virtue, self-righteousness. "You hypocrite." That's the wretched gross sin that is always blind to its own sinfulness.

Self-righteousness, it's the sin that Jesus repeatedly condemned the scribes and Pharisees for, not only in the sermon on the mount, but all the way through His entire ministry. Self-righteousness is a sin of blindness, it puts a beam in your eye so you can't see reality. It distorts your vision of everything because there you are looking at your own wretched sinfulness and you can't see it. You won't see it.

So, the log is self-righteousness that prevents you from seeing your own self. It's the worst of sins because it damns you. You don't need a Savior. You see no need for grace, no need for forgiveness. And so Jesus said, "This is the danger of these people. They can't even conquer the sin that's in them. They're wretched on the inside. They may be virtuous on the outside, and they may choose a life of superficial virtue over a life of manifest vice, but the truth is, they can't help you, they can't get the sins out of your life because they have so many in their own life, and they're blind to all those by the construction of this massive log of self-righteousness."

False teachers become very adept at creating clandestine coverings, very adept at hiding their true wickedness. That's what I say. They're spiritual terrorists who are hidden in safe, religious places, but who pour out spiritual anthrax, hypocrites. The word *hupokrita* is an actor, it's a word for an actor playing a part. They're phony. They're actors.

On the other hand, Jesus is not a hypocrite. He is sinless, spotless, undefiled, the One in whom the Father is well pleased, without sin. And so His vision is crystal clear as indicated in Revelation chapter 1, when it pictures the Lord Jesus looking into the church with penetrating laser eyes and finding all the sin that is there so that He can deal with it. Jesus can really see what's in your eye and He can get it out. If you follow the wrong teacher, one who is blind, and earthy, and hypocritical, you're going in the pit, void of God, and void of dealing with your sins.

And lastly, fourthly, the fourth danger of following the wrong spiritual teacher is they are evil. I guess we could say they are without piety, they're evil. They're just evil. And He makes this clear in the next simple little proverb parable. Verse 43, "There is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit." That's axiomatic. That is, I mean, the fruit of a tree is an un failing indicator of the health of the tree. If you have good fruit on the tree, you've got a good, healthy tree. If you have got a bad tree, you're going to get bad fruit. If the tree is toxic, the fruit is toxic. If the tree is sweet, the fruit is sweet. I mean, that's self-evident.

This is a simple principle, a simple parable, a simple analogy. You can look at the fruit and tell the tree. And He expands it in verse 44. "Every tree is known by its own fruit." If you're looking for figs, don't look for a thorn bush. They don't grow there. If you're looking for grapes, don't look for a briar bush. They don't grow on briar bushes. What you're going to get on a thorn bush is thorns. What you're going to get on a briar bush is briars. Those are the pictures of the bad trees. In other words, they produce what is their nature. They produce what is bad, what is toxic, what is harmful. And that's the final danger that Jesus lays out here.

This is serious. You get the wrong teacher and you know what's going to come out of his life? Evil. And you know what's going to come out of your life? Evil. That's an absolute. Thorn bushes don't grow figs. Briar bushes don't grow grapes.

Now our Lord even gave a further explanation of this in that sermon that Matthew records, in Matthew 7:16. "You will know them by their fruits." Who? False prophets - the prior verse. So in Matthew's discussion of the same statements, he connects them to the false prophets. And that's why I say that whole section in Luke has to be interpreted in relationship to the false prophets who were represented then by the Jewish established leaders.

"Beware of false prophets ... You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn't bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then you will know them by their fruits."

And Jesus says all that connected to the false prophets. They just produce bad fruit. If you're looking for something good, something edible, something beneficial, they don't produce it. They can't. It's not

in their nature. It's not who they are. So you have a very serious problem.

Jesus in Matthew 12:33, again talking to the Pharisees, says, "Make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; the tree is known by its fruit." And then He says, "You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For out of the mouth speaks of that which fills the heart."

That's the false teachers again. You just produce evil, that's all that can come out because your hearts are evil. So He makes an application of that in verse 45. "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; the evil *man* out of the evil *treasure* - "in his heart, implied " - brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart."

Whatever is in your heart is what comes out. A good man has a changed heart. An evil man does not. The good man here, then, represents the righteous, represents the kingdom child, the regenerated. The truly good man whose heart the Lord has changed or even replaced in the language of Ezekiel 36, He's given him a new heart, the language of Jeremiah 31:33. And because he's been transformed on the inside, he brings forth what is good, and what comes out of his mouth is good, and it represents the goodness of his heart, having been transformed by God.

On the other hand, the evil man has an evil heart, and so what comes out of his mouth is only evil. Not only out of his mouth but in his conduct. The mouth is just sort of the first place that evil shows up. It's the easiest place to manifest your nature. Much easier to say things that are representative of your nature than to do them.

So be careful who you follow, folks. Be careful who your teacher is. The world is full of teachers, spiritual terrorists hiding in apparently safe places, dispensing spiritual anthrax, and doing it in a way that is so deceptive and so subtle people are literally inhaling it gladly. And in the end, they wind up in the pit because their teachers are blind, they are earthly, they are hypocritical, and they are evil. And what they produce is the same blindness, the same earthiness, the same hypocrisy, and the same evil that is characteristic of their own lives.

So Jesus is saying, "Why don't you follow Me? I am the way, the truth and the life. And no man comes to the Father but by Me," He said in John 14:6. Jesus has clear sight. Jesus is God. The message is from God. Jesus is pure righteousness, no hypocrisy, and His life is sinless. He produces righteousness in those who follow Him.

So who are you following? Who is your spiritual teacher? Serious choice, the most serious you'll ever make ever in all your life because of the implications in eternity.

Father, we thank You again for Your Word this morning, for the simple, straightforward and penetrating, unforgettable teaching of Jesus on this matter, of the danger of following the wrong spiritual teacher. Father, may everyone here follow Christ Jesus, and those who uphold His Word, and to exalt Him as the only way, truth, life. And may we know that there is no salvation in any other name. No man comes to You but by Him. And if anyone loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be *anathema*, accursed. You couldn't have made it more clear. So as You said to them that day, who were gathered calling themselves "disciples," if you're going to call Me "Lord," then come all the way, embrace Me and Me alone, and do what I say, and you will escape the judgment. To that end we

pray for those who hear this message in the Savior's name. Amen.

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