

Roots and Foundations

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Preacher: Hoong Phak Ng

[0 : 00] Let's pray. Become humbly, Lord, to your eternal word. Speak to our hearts. Help us, Lord, to respond appropriately and to put them into practice.

In your mighty name we pray. Amen. Thanks, Abang, for reading the word just now. If my wife comes up to me at Habib, and showed me a stone, sparkling brilliantly, and she asked, What do you think?

Cubic zirconia or diamond? Goodness, for the life of me, I won't know. To my untrained eye, all look like diamond anyway.

But maybe it's zirconia. I really don't know. Maybe it's really the real thing. But never mind, never mind. Put it back, put it back. I come to church weekly.

And I've been doing so since I was 20. I've been hearing Jesus' words on a regular basis. And I'm just like the next Christian.

[1 : 16] We speak the same spiritual lingo. We sing the same songs. We listen to the same sermon. We call Jesus Lord, even Lord, Lord. But sometimes I get worried when I remember the passage that goes something like this.

On the last day, many will come calling Jesus Lord, Lord. And oh, he actually turns them away. He does not know them.

And that passage from Paul. To examine ourselves. To see if we are in the faith. To test ourselves. Hmm.

Is my faith the real thing? Am I really a disciple of Jesus? Now we have reached the end of what has been called the Sermon on the Plain.

And if you keep your Bibles open, we are at chapter 6. And there's a sermon outline which may be helpful. And we are in the midst of this series in the Gospel of Luke.

[2 : 24] And back in verse 17, you will notice that Jesus is speaking to a large crowd consisting of disciples and others who are not yet the inquiring crowd.

Maybe the hanger-ons. They have come to Jesus and given him a hearing. And he has told them some pretty difficult stuff. He said, It is okay to be poor, hungry, grieving, reviled and rejected on account of him.

Such are blessed. And those who rejected Jesus because they wanted comfort, riches and worldly acceptance and reputation are to be most pitied.

Then he tells them to emulate their Heavenly Father and to love in the most radical way and unnatural way. Love their enemies.

Love the tax collector. Love the Romans. Love people who hate, mistreat, curse them, insult them and take from them.

[3 : 33] Don't retell it but bless and pray and give them what they want. Hmm. It caused them to pause.

In today's passage, Jesus continues his sermon by telling his listeners not to follow blind guides as they will lead them to destruction.

Then he goes on to show them what will further characterize them out as his disciples. One, his disciples will be marked by their good fruit.

And two, his disciples will be marked by their obedience to him. Jesus tells them a parable. In it, there's a blind leader, a blind follower, people with wood stuck in their eyes.

The Bible uses blindness to refer to those who lack faith or insight and those who cling to falsehood. Verse 39. Can the blind lead the blind?

[4 : 37] Will they not both fall into a pit? The student is not above the teacher. But everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher. And who are these blind teachers?

Well, Jesus has called these Jewish religious leaders and the Pharisees and the teachers of the law blind guides in Matthew 15 and 23. Now, these people have rejected Jesus' authority and his teachings, even though they have seen the signs of the Messiah.

They are the willfully blind. And people who follow them will continue to be spiritually blind and will become like them, little Pharisees, with life marked and paralyzed by ceremonial cleanliness, by self-righteousness, by self-righteousness, judgmental and condemnatory attitudes and a hypocritical spirit.

And both the blind teacher and his disciple will fall into a pit to eternal destruction. And Jesus says, follow me.

As teacher? Actually, more than that. Verse 45 makes it clear that he is calling them to follow him as Lord and to submit to his authority and the authority of his word.

[6 : 08] Yes, it would be actually foolish not to follow him. Look, he is the one who by word and deed have demonstrated that he has the full authority of God.

He is the teacher who sees clearly, who is trustworthy, who is compassionate and merciful to sinners, who forgives sins, who demonstrates the love and generosity of the Father, and who restores the true loving intent of the law, who himself does what he preaches.

And he said he will give sight to those who are blind. For us today, it begs the question, who is your teacher?

Who are you listening to? In church? Online? In books? If he is one who submits to the authority of the biblical Jesus and his word, good.

But we have to be really discerning that they are not preaching a different Jesus or a different gospel. Careful that they are not agreeing to the current gender ideology.

[7 : 21] Are they preaching the gospel for profit to sustain a questionable empire? Or are your leaders the secular influencer of the day?

The woke social warrior? Or those who tell you to follow your heart, speak your truth, even if it drips with ungodliness? Jesus wants us to be careful as we choose our teachers.

And for those who would follow Jesus, being his disciples is actually not about following a set of rules or regulations. It was and it still is an invitation to relationship with him.

In Palestine then, it often meant living home and family to literally follow him as he walks through the country.

But they get to listen to his teachings, to see him perform his miracles, live with him in a community with other disciples, Be his disciples.

[9 : 02] In the community of disciples, they will have brothers and sisters in the faith.

And today we call it a local church. And discipleship is a lifelong journey. And each person is a sinner saved by grace, still plagued by sin, gradually bearing good fruit, and yet sometimes fall. And Jesus tells them now how they should deal with the sins of others and of their own. Verse 41. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?

How can you say to your brother, Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye, when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite.

First take the plank out of your eye, and then you see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. The Lord uses an absurd, humorous picture to drive home his point.

[10 : 15] I can imagine, you know, my ophthalmology colleague, all scrubbed up, ready to remove a speck of foreign body in my eye. But I am squirming and whimpering in terror because he is practically blind.

He has a plank covering his own eye. Now, specks and planks blocking our vision are wrong beliefs, wrong attitudes, character flaws, besetting sins.

They are bad fruits. Jesus says not to be quick to criticize the flaws of others while ignoring your own even bigger flaw.

What might it look like today? Well, you decided to confront Andrew because he slandered a church deacon. But you conveniently forgot that you have been black-mouthing the pastor.

A young person calls out the sin of pornography in a youth meeting while continuing in it himself. Or we criticize another church committee but fail to hear the self-righteousness and the condemnatory tone by which we say it.

[11 : 34] And ignoring the problems of our own. Yes, what about judging the tiny faults of our spouse and children while ignoring our own?

Jesus says, as my disciple, don't be like that. Don't be hypocrites. Now, this is an example of how the self-righteous Jewish religious teachers were blind.

They love to point out the uncleanness and the sins of others while ignoring their own. But not so, Jesus' disciples. Before pointing fingers at others, take a good look at ourselves.

Do what you need to do to get right. And then help your brother. Now, Jesus' disciples is one who can see the speck in his brother's eye and the plank in his own eye and is willing to remove both.

He is one who will honestly examine his life before God. Honest about his sins. Repent and ask the Holy Spirit to change him. And then help his brother.

[12 : 49] He doesn't turn a blind eye to the sin of his brother and pretend that everything is alright. Ayah, paisela.

Why so busybody? But love demands that we do something about it. We are not to be judgmental, but be discerning.

And with compassion and love, in kindness, gentleness and humility, offer help to another. But mind your own spiritual state before you mind the spiritual state of others.

And the brother in return must be willing for help. And then, with plank and speck removed, we both can see clearly to continue our journey as disciples together.

Now, the disciples of Jesus are marked by good fruit. As disciples of Jesus, we want to be like Jesus. He is good and blameless.

[13 : 54] We aspire to be like him in character and conduct. We want to bear good fruit as a result of our relationship with the Holy One. Examples of good fruit abound in the Bible.

But the most famous list is the one in Galatians. I want to have love. I want to be joyful. Be at peace. Be patient and kind and good and gentle.

Be faithful and be self-controlled. Jesus gives a parable of trees and fruits and heart.

No good tree, verse 43, 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 briars. We do not need to be farmers to understand this. We do not get good fruits from a tree with trunks and roots that have been eaten up by boar worms.

[15 : 05] And we do not get durians from rain trees or paddy from lalang. A good tree will produce good fruit and a bad tree, bad fruits.

And Jesus brings this truth to bear on a person's heart and conduct. Verse 45, A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart.

Jesus says, You can tell what a person is like on the inside by his fruit, by his action and words.

They reveal the condition of the heart. Remember the specks and the plank in people's eye? Well, those are products of evil stored up in their hearts.

They can tell you what sort of people they are and what type of heart they have. A commentator wrote, The tongue, the things we say, reveal what is in our heart.

[16 : 19] One's words are the most direct communication of the inward being. When a man's conversation is ungodly, his heart is graceless and unconverted.

If his speech is carnal, he is carnal. If it is worldly, he is worldly. If it is godless, he is godless.

If it is profane, he is profane. If it is mean, he is mean. Unquote. Sometimes we say, Oh, she is rude and explosive like that.

She shoots off her mouth without thinking. But actually, she has a good heart. This passage won't allow us to get away with that. It is the ungathered remarks of a person that most reveals the heart.

When the Bible speaks of the heart, most times it is not talking about the organ that circulates our blood and keeps us alive. Yeah, we understand this, don't we?

[17 : 20] When we say, My heart is burning with anger or my heart aches for you, we are not talking about that organ. The biblical definition of the heart is this. It is the control center of your being.

It thinks, it feels, it drives your will into action. What does God say about the human heart? The unregenerated heart is evil.

Full stop. In Genesis 8, 21, God says, Every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.

Ecclesiastes 9, God says, The hearts of people are full of evil, and there is madness in their hearts while they live. Jeremiah says, The heart is deceitful above all things, desperately wicked. Now this heart rejects God and his ways, runs away from him, and refuses to submit to the Creator as king. This heart wants to rule itself, to live its own way, and this heart adores the sinful nature. [18:37] We cannot trust this heart. This unregenerated heart can hide behind seemingly good behavior. Jesus says the Pharisees are like cups, which are clean on the outside, but yucky on the inside.

Like whitewashed tombs, on the outside beautiful, but inside filled with dead man's bones, and everything unclean. God is not pleased with this kind of play acting, from which we get the word hypocrite.

He wants integrity from the inside out. And there is only one man in history who is truly good, thoroughly good, with an absolutely good heart, and that is the Lord Jesus.

The blameless one, the sinless one, whose every action is good, and even his enemies grudgingly admit it. If we want good hearts, we have to follow him.

But before we can follow Jesus, we need this heart fixed, changed. We need a new control center that can actually respond to God, that can actually please him.

[19:55] And lo and behold, that is exactly what God promised to do when he cleanses his people of their sins. Through the prophet Ezekiel, God says of that day, which we read just now, Ezekiel 36, I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean.

I will cleanse you from all your impurities, and from all your idols. 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, and be careful to keep my laws.

Now the New Testament explains how this miracle of a spiritual heart transplant takes place, and it's through the Savior Jesus Christ.

When we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior at conversion, we are cleansed by his blood shed on the cross, all our sins forgiven and removed. We are new creations, with a new heart, with the Holy Spirit indwelling.

He removed our all evil heart of stone, and gave us a new heart of flesh. And this new heart is one that finally enables us to say, yes to Jesus, enables us to believe the Gospel, a heart that melts, at the knowledge of his love and mercy, so that we might turn from sin and unrighteousness.

[21:30] And the evidence of this changed heart is the bearing of good fruit. And we cannot escape that. For some, we see a visible dramatic change in their lives at conversion.

For others, less so, but still there. Now, this heart of flesh is good, but it's not yet perfect.

One day it will be perfected. But on this side of heaven, it can still listen to the sinful nature. It can still give in to it and store evil.

But, it finally has the ability to say yes to Jesus, which the old heart did not. As a consequence of this, along with good fruits, I see with anguish evidence of the old self.

I just lost my temper this morning when my son caused us all to be late for church. I remember the unkind words I said to my wife last night.

[22:40] I feel impatience rising within me when I have to answer for the fifth or sixth time the same question at dinner from my mother with dementia.

But, the old heart doesn't give a hoot about when we sin. This new heart feels the ugliness of sin. The disciple is not a happy sinner. He longs to change. He wants a good heart that bears good fruit. And the way to produce good fruit is to remain in relationship with the Lord. It is through knowing Him, hearing from Him in the Bible, feeling His prompting, and responding to Him.

And He will prompt. That's not a kind word to say. That is rude. There you go again, angry at the driver.

[23:41] Don't click on the video. It doesn't look right. Not in words that we can hear, but we sense it in our heart. And change may come when we are convicted by His word and we resolve to make a change.

It may not be a drastic change. It may simply involve small steps like a written note, a kind gesture, a word of encouragement, a subtle change at work, or saying sorry.

When bad fruit springs up, the disciple repents. But he remains secure in God's love, remembering the grace of the Gospel.

He asks God to change his heart. His strongest weapon? Prayer. His ally? The Holy Spirit.

By grace, he will be able to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live a self-controlled, upright, and godly life.

[24 : 52] And that is the mark of the Holy Spirit's progressive work in our new hearts towards complete goodness. The good fruit of life is not measured by one moment in time, but by the direction of our lives.

It is a journey of being made holy. And to make it on this journey successfully, we have to look at our lives with serious and honest introspection.

How is my heart? What do I need the Lord to change? Disciples of Jesus are marked by their obedience to him.

Jesus looks at the large crowd before him, both disciples and the curious inquirers. Now he had spent time teaching them, healing their diseases, freeing them from impure spirits.

They have come from far, from all over Israel, some from pretty far places. Now it's very commendable that they made the journey. Now Jesus must have been pleased that they had come and they had taken their time to hear him.

[26 : 04] Many call him Lord, some even Lord, Lord, a term of heartfelt allegiance. Coming to him is good. Listening to him is good.

that's what we are all doing. But Jesus doesn't want them or us to be mistaken. Just coming and listening is really not good enough.

In verse 46, Jesus says, Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not do what I say? Now when Jesus posed the rhetorical question to those who called him Lord, Lord but did not do what he say, he was simply telling them they are not his disciples.

When I say disciples are marked by obedience to Jesus, I'm not talking about a simplistic obedience to law, of rules and regulations.

We are not saved by works. Rather, it is a product of a life that is a consequence of having faith in Jesus, a natural fruit of believing the gospel.

[27 : 21] These people that Jesus was, in a way, scolding, did not, have not or did not believe in what he said and so had not put their faith and trust in him.

And so his word had no effects on their lives. There was no change in them. They were simply paying lip service to his lordship, simply play, acting, discipleship.

Whether you put into practice what Jesus says or not has consequences. In verse 47, As for everyone who comes to me and hears my voice and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like.

They are like a man building a house who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but it could not shake it because it was well built.

These are disciples, true disciples. By God's grace, they have believed and responded to what he has revealed about who he is and what he has come to do.

[28 : 41] They believe his divinity and so worshipped him. They believe he ransomed his life for their salvation and so trusted him as saviour.

They have security and assurance in Jesus. Their faith in Jesus and his gospel has changed their lives. They embrace his way of seeing and doing things, bearing good fruit by abiding in him.

Their foundation is the Lord Jesus and his word. And this foundation is an eternal foundation. When the storms of life smashes into their lives, their faith in him is not shaken.

They continue to trust their sovereign, all-powerful, all-loving, all-trustworthy Lord who had promised to be with them always. Brothers and sisters, many of you bear this testimony.

Your lives have been hit by the storms of tragedy, of sickness, of terminal diagnosis, of loss, debilitation, of mental health issues.

[29 : 58] Yet, you remain steadfast and faithful. It surely has not been easy, but your faith has been built on the solid rock that is Christ.

Now, not putting Jesus' words into practice has its own consequence as well. Verse 49, sign. But to the one who hears Jesus' words and does not put them into practice, it's like a man who builds a house on the ground without a foundation.

The moment the torrent struck the house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete. They come to Jesus.

They heard him, but they did not believe him enough to commit their lives to him completely and so did not apply what they heard into their lives.

They say no to Jesus more times than they ever said yes to him. They could be listening to the blind teachers more than Jesus. Their lives may be full of things displeasing to God and yet to them it's no more a problem.

[31 : 21] They're chill with it. Their lives are not built on Jesus or his word. They are built on other things which are temporal, which have got no permanent value.

When disaster strikes, their whole world will come crashing down. And furthermore, no assurance of saving faith can be given.

God is definitely calling such people to take stock of their lives. It is time to take Jesus' words seriously. This last parable of the builders carry an even more serious warning because one day there will be a disaster that comes upon everyone.

That mighty flood of God's judgment will be brought to his kingdom.

If you are not a Christian today, he calls you to believe the good news and to choose Jesus as your teacher and as your Lord. He promises you a new heart that will be the basis of your successful journey as a disciple.

[32 : 37] for those of us who call ourselves Christians, today is a good opportunity to do a self-evaluation on the condition of our heart and our discipleship.

May we all be genuine products of a life of walking with Jesus. Amen. Let's pray. Hear us, Lord, and help us to respond appropriately and to put your words into practice.

For you are Saviour and Lord. Amen.