

Intro:

We’re in our series, Jesus: encounter. It’s a series we’ve embarked on during this season because we believe it’s a season of growth for us, both growth in terms of new people checking out Jesus and Ethnos and growth in terms of personal maturity for those who follow Jesus. We’re in the closing statements of one of Jesus’ sermons he gave some two thousand years ago, a sermon where he has been laying out some of the foundational of the new life he has come to give us as humanity. And as we read and discuss this passage today, his main point is clear: **Who we follow determines who we become. Following Jesus ensures the best outcome.**

Let’s read the text, I’ll make few points, and we’ll open it up for discussion. Read text: Luke 6:39-49

This is a great passage that starts by stating our main idea pretty clearly.

Who we follow determines who become.

This is what v.39-40 is all about. Blind guides can only bring people so far; in fact, they can lead people to the pits. And an apprentice will be like their teacher. Who we follow determines where we end up, it determines who we become. The question to ask throughout this passage revolves around this: who do we follow today? Who is the leader, who determines what’s important, what things have value in our lives? Ourselves? Media voices like Oprah or NPR or FOX News? Our careers? Other people (some of us are bound by other’s opinions, we’re people pleasers)?

Jesus then elaborates on this main idea by making two statements.

1. Beware of hypocrisy.

Three things:

- Jesus brings this up because the primary leaders of the day were known for their hypocrisy. In fact, each metaphor used in this passage is clearly applied in the parallel gospel of Matthew to the religious leaders of the day. Furthermore, just prior to this whole message Luke has been describing Jesus’ conflict with those leaders- see your extra study notes. So Jesus has leadership in mind to a certain extent, which is why Jesus launches into this specific issue as he talks about who we follow. Don’t become like them- don’t fall into hypocrisy. But of course, we don’t really need anyone to teach us how to be hypocrites- it’s a potential pit fall for all of us, isn’t it? And it’s a big problem, perhaps one of the largest, when it comes to spirituality.

- Let’s be clear on what hypocrisy is. According to our verses here, it is that act where we critique and try to help others with their shortcomings/issues (especially those that are close to us- note we’re talking about “brothers”) while all the while not dealing with the short-comings/issues we have. (v.41-42) We give a false image of ourselves, which is true to the word hypocrisy- the word hypocrite is a word taken from the acting world of the time, referring to actors playing a role that was not really them.

And so we’ll critique people at home, work, church, for being too gossipy or rude or cliquish or greedy or materialistic or culturally unaware or unspiritual and so on, while all the while ignoring or not working on our issues as hard as we critique others in their issues. God forbid us to follow leaders like this. But God forbid we critique leaders before we critique ourselves!

- Of course, it’s not that we can’t have an opinion about other people’s issues- I mean, cliquishness and greed and racism and so on is wrong, and it needs to be dealt with. Jesus is not saying you can’t deal with other people’s issues. No, what he’s saying is that we have to deal with our stuff first. (v.42) A lot of people misunderstand the teaching of Jesus here, thinking that Jesus is for a world where we can’t confront anyone with the shortcomings and issues they have; that’s clearly not the case. It’s about not dealing first with your issues before getting into each other’s business.

The question is: are we being hypocritical today?

2. Who we are is truly reflected by how we deal with ourselves and others.

Jesus then launches into a different set of images to continue to help us think about the sort of people we are becoming. And the message is clear: who we are is reflected by what we do. There are a couple of things to be aware of, however, as Jesus brings this up.

- First, note that this is given as an explanation of the previous point and paragraph. Note the word “for” there in v.43, which means that that what follows is giving the reasoning behind what has been said just before this. When

you tie it in that way, Jesus’ point gets more specific: who we are is reflected by not just what we do in general, but by how we deal with shortcomings we see in ourselves and others. How do we deal with our issues? Do we ignore, evade, rationalize, get defensive? Or do we open up, get humble, get serious, get honest with them? And how do we deal with others and their issues? Do we critique and approach others with a sense of snobbery and pride and self-interest, or do we approach them genuine with love and care and concern? Isn’t it true that who we are is really seen in how we deal with both our issues and others?

I think especially of how we deal with others in our family. I remember when I first became a Jesus follower someone told me that who I was at home with my siblings and parents- that was the real me. It didn’t matter if I was some nice guy at school and church. My outburst of impatience with my mom, my anger with my sister- that was the real me. That truth forced me, and continues to force me today as I have my own family, to ask the hard question of if I’m really following Jesus.

Who we are is truly reflected in how we deal with our shortcomings and how we interact with those closest to us.

- There’s a second important thing to note in Jesus’ discussion here, and it is brought up by Jesus as he talks about the good and evil person (read v.45). This verse should get you thinking two questions:

a) how is it that we become good?

b) why is it that what we say becomes the focus of who we are?

On one hand, it makes sense that what we say reflects who we are. And that is probably worth thinking about.

But Jesus goes for more- he takes a turn toward the deeper and makes it clear- it’s not just about what you say, it’s about what you do. And in fact, we become to good people we long to become by doing what Jesus says. Read v. 46. Talk is not enough. Singing worship songs is not enough. We need to actually do what he asks.

3. We need to obey Jesus as leader, we need to follow Him by obeying him. And that is what makes us the good people we want to become.

Regarding becoming “good,” not only this partially communicated in the imagery of how those who do this are the stable houses in the imagery. But elsewhere in Jesus’ teaching as recorded by Luke, there’s a tie in between those who obey Jesus’ words and them being the good people. Note for example, Luke 8:8, 15.

Three things to note:

1. What if I don’t feel like a good person?

It’s interesting to ask this because elsewhere in the Bible we are told that none of us are good unless God comes and gives us a new heart to be good. See Ezekiel 36:25-27. So the point here is not that you feel good, or even are good- the point is that if and when we respond to Jesus, we become the good people as defined by Jesus in our passage.

2. What if I keep messing up?

As a sex addict in my first 10 years of being a Jesus-follower, I can totally understand. I would say the point is that Jesus is not asking for perfection- Jesus actually knows that we will not be perfect in our pursuit. And so he tells us how to respond when we mess up, in fact when we keep messing up. Are we open about it, finding help and support to grow and be transformed, one day at a time? Or do we dismiss it for whatever reason- for fear, discouragement, thinking it’s not that bad, and so on.

3. This brings on the life we’re all longing for, I believe.

Note the closing imagery again. There’s a house standing, there’s a house who’s “ruin will be great.” (v.49). It’s not that life will be perfect- the same storm hits both houses, both lives. But one house can stand, the other can’t. What sort of life are we gunning for?

Who we follow determines who we become. Following Jesus ensures the best outcome.

I believe there are many of us whom God is speaking to us about something here today. Before we get there, though:

Questions/Comments?

Challenge:

- Who are we following today? Who is our leader? Who is determining for us what is important, valuable, worthwhile? Jesus, or someone or something else?

- Are you obeying Jesus today? Is there something he’s asked to do, to change, to grow in, that you are avoiding for whatever reason? He’s not asking for perfection, but he is asking you come to him and give yourself to him and invite others to be a part of that journey. Forgiveness, porn, people pleasing.

Extra Study Notes:

1. While these sayings had many parallels in Jesus’ time, Jesus’ message is ultimately unique in that he calls for allegiance to him (v.46)

2. While the passage does not explicitly mention the Pharisees as people Jesus is speaking towards, it is clear that Jesus has in mind the Pharisees and religious teachers here, as seen in the following:

- The events leading up to his talk here (5:17-6:11) have been about Jesus’ conflict with the Pharisees and teachers.
- The imagery of the blind leading the blind (v.39) explicitly refers to Pharisees in Matt 15:14.
- Hypocrites (v. 42) is a term extensively used of the Pharisees in Matthew (eg- Matt. 6:2,5, 16; 15:7; 22:18; 23:13-15, 23).
- The tree imagery (v.43-44) as to do with Pharisees in Matthew 7:15-20.

Why does Luke not make explicit the connections when compared to Matthew? Luke is written primarily to a Gentile audience, so he may feel like he does not need to emphasize the connection (Matthew is written for a Jewish audience, hence the emphasis). He also emphasizes that these are not just problems with Pharisees, but all of us- this is consistent with his theme that Jesus is for everyone, regardless of class, race, gender, etc.