

Read the Label!

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.”

The next time you are at the grocery store, watch the people. Most read the labels before putting the item in their cart. They check out the sodium content, fat, carbohydrates, even such things as “red dye 40.” They are careful in what they put in their bodies; maybe we all should. But are they as careful in what they put in their souls? Are we? ***“Watch out,”*** Jesus says in our text. Before we consume something, we should read the label. And what are we looking for? “100% pure God’s Word.” Today Jesus warns us of what is out there, and then shows us what it means to live on a diet of his Word.

I. First, the warning about false teaching.

“Watch out,” Jesus cries out to us from two thousand years ago! When I was at my son’s baseball game, a foul ball went over the fence. Someone in the crowd shouted, “Watch out.” People were talking. Some reading a book or checking out messages on their smart phones. The warning, “watch out,” told them to get their noses out of their books and to look up. Why?

“Watch out for false prophets.” That is the danger. No, he is not talking about that guy who tries to predict future events. A prophet is someone who opens his mouth and proclaims something, like pastors. Guess what? There are false prophets out there, many of them. This means they tell us lies. This means they say things that do not agree with the truth of God’s Word. And they are dangerous, ***“They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”***

False prophets are found in churches. They look good. They talk a lot about God. They probably lead people in prayer. Maybe they even performed miracles like driving out demons or healing someone. But they are ferocious wolves hiding amongst God’s people with one purpose: to devour them. Some know they speak lies. Others maybe actually believe their lies are the truth. But in the end, they lead only to destruction.

If they are disguised as sheep, how can we recognize them? Simple. ***“By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.”***

Look at the fruit, what the false prophet produces. He may make a prophecy that did not come true, like saying Jesus was suppose to return last November. He may deny creation or the fall into sin, the flood, or that Jonah actually spent three days in the belly of a fish, the virgin birth, the resurrection from the dead. But ultimately, he will lead people away from God and Jesus. With a smiling face he will preach about the love of God, but neglect to speak about God’s anger over sin. He will talk about an inner goodness to mankind. So, it is easy. Compare what they say to the Bible.

Now, why is Jesus so concerned here? ***“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’***

Imagine you are standing in line for heaven. Before you are a group of “super-saints,” people who certainly acted and talked more godly than you. You know you should have read your Bibles more. These super-saints bragged about how much they read their Bibles. You know you did not resist all the devil’s temptations. They bragged about how godly they have been.

Yet, you hear the Lord say to the super-saints, ***“I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.”*** This is the most chilling thing anyone could ever hear from God. They will not enter heaven. They are judged evil. Why? Notice what is missing. There is nothing about Jesus. It was all about what they did.

Now put Jesus into the picture. Yes, you have not prayed as much as you could or should. Neither have I. You have not loved your neighbor as much as God loves you. In fact, many times you and I have either been indifferent to our neighbor or actually hoped bad things will happen to him. Yet, what does the Lord say? “Come, and take your inheritance in heaven.” Why? Because of Jesus and not how much we prayed or not prayed.

The Apostle Paul once confessed that Jesus came to save sinners of whom he was the worse. If you or I were having coffee with Paul and heard him say that, our first gut instinct would be to say, “No, you are not that bad.” I mean, if your son or grandson said he was the worse player on the baseball team, we would try to build him up. “At least you struck out swinging.” But if we said that to Paul, “At least you tried hard,” then we become false prophets. Paul was the worse of sinners, no doubt about that. So are you. So am I. We can’t “try” ourselves into heaven.

If there was any hope that any human being could somehow crawl into heaven, God would have directed him to do so. But there is no one who is righteous, not one. So God sent Jesus into this world, yes, to die for our sins on the cross and then to lead us through the grave into heaven. ***“No one comes to the Father except through me,”*** he promises. And you learn this only through his Word.

This is why Jesus tells us to read the labels and warns of false prophets. Good, don't eat or shove a bunch of bad stuff into yourself. We get it. But you also don't go out of the grocery store without buying something. You also need food, good food, to live and survive. So, don't just stay away from false prophets; get as much as you can from the truth of God's Word.

II. Second, the blessing of hearing and believing the truth.

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Both of these men went to church. They both heard the same sermon each week and every year. But when the announcements were made and everyone asked to leave, one man went home thinking church is over, and the other man went home thinking church is begun. One man is ready to move on to the next thing, and the other doesn't leave what he heard behind.

When I served a church in Colorado, we had a member who worked as an inspector. Colorado was then the most popular place to move to. Homes were being built left and right. Sadly, some contractors wanted to cut a few corners to increase their profits. In Colorado you can't build basements like us. You had to dig down until you found bedrock and then used the bedrock as the base for the house's foundation. This member had to go into new homes and insure that these houses were founded on the bedrock. If not, cracks would appear in the walls in a couple years and some homes even collapsed.

That's the picture Jesus gives us here. One man built his house on top of the ground, on the sand, and it didn't take long for the house to collapse. The other knew better. He had a shovel and he used it to dig through the sand to the bedrock and from there he laid his foundation for his house. No storm, no wind, nothing could knock down that house.

Friends, may we be like that man. If we don't put God's Word into practice, if we don't actually believe it, then the next time someone laughs at us when we pray or when we face a terrible illness or when we get into an argument, we will collapse. If we base our security on how much we have in the bank, then don't be confused if you get depressed when it isn't enough.

No. Let's instead build everything on God's sure promises and Word. I had the pleasure to do a wedding a little more than a week ago. I was pleased by the passages the couple chose for their wedding sermon. I told them in pre-marriage what a neat idea it would be if they would read those passages each day and if an argument begins, to read them again, like the one from Ephesians 4, ***"Be kind and compassionate to one another. Forgive one another just as in Christ God forgave."*** I ask, how long can an argument last if those words were actually believed and put into practice?

Yes, God tells us not to worry; he will give us what we need so we can spend our worry time seeking God and his righteousness. He tells us to not be anxious, but to put everything on his shoulders through prayer. What will happen to your stress if you actually did that? But let's get to the bigger promises. He tells us, ***"Take heart, son, your sins are forgiven."*** I rather hear that than, "At least you tried." He says, ***"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."*** I rather hear that at a funeral than, "At least they are no longer suffering." God promises he has a place for me in his heaven. I rather hear that than to hear I got a promotion or a raise.

How can we put his word into practice? First, we have an example of that in our Old Testament Reading. Don't leave it at church; take it home, talk about it, paint it on your doors, in other words, let it dominate. Second, and simply, believe it. Trust it. It is the truth.

So, friends, be careful. Read the labels out there. If something contradicts God's Word, throw it away. But if it is God's Word, consume it, don't get enough of it. INJ Amen.