

# Trinity VIII

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Preacher: Bishop Chad Jones

[ 0 : 00 ] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Please be seated. One cannot help but think of Little Red Lighting Hood when you hear the Gospel proclaimed today from the Sermon on the Mount.

This is a section from the Sermon on the Mount in which our Lord Jesus Christ warns us about people who come nearby and very intimately and claim God's authority.

There are many so-called prophets in the world and have been since the beginning of divine revelation. But there are many prophets, our Lord warns us, who are false.

They appear as though they are dressed in sheep's clothing, but inside they are tradatory, wild wolves. And so we are warned.

We are warned that there are such people about us. People who claim the authority of God and claim to speak on God's behalf. The Lord Jesus instructs us this morning that there is a simple test to prove whether or not a prophet is true.

[ 1 : 10 ] If a teacher comes in the name of Christ and clearly manifests the love of God, and is motivated by love and a desire to save souls and build up the church, and once teaching conforms to Holy Scripture, one can safely assume that such a professed teacher is authentic, is a true prophet.

However, if someone begins to teach contrary to Scripture, and the teaching is not rooted in Scripture, and the person crosses hurt and division in the church, clearly that is a false prophet, and we are not to listen to what they say no matter what.

The Lord Jesus says it's very basic. We will know someone, we will know what a person really is, by what they do. That is the litmus test.

The proof is in the pudding, as it were. Our Lord uses colorful imagery to describe this fact. He says, do you expect that a thorn bush can bear grapes, or that a briar could breed for figs?

That's impossible. We don't have to be experts in agriculture to know that a good, healthy tree bears good, healthy fruit, and a bad tree produces evil fruit.

[ 2 : 32 ] Our Lord makes the basic and plain teaching to us today that we will know people by what they do, not necessarily by what they say. A person is demonstrated to be authentic when their fruits are authentic and godly.

If they are not, then indeed we have in our hands a false prophet. Now, clergymen and church leaders are usually considered to be the first class of people we are to monitor.

But this test is actually to be applied to anyone who professes the Lord Jesus, anyone who says that they are doing or attempting to do the will of God.

The clergy are not entirely carbon copies of Little Red Riding Hood's grandma. We wish it were so, perhaps.

But the fact of the matter is that we live in a fallen world. Now, in the church, we experience this all the time. What do I mean by that? Well, we've all had this experience.

[ 3 : 34 ] In the church, we will, from time to time, encounter people who enter the church, join the church, profess to be believers in Christ, and then one discovers very quickly that they set about to do things like dividing people, antagonizing others, stirring up trouble, and most particularly, wanting to get their own way.

All Christians are warned not to be ravenous wild wolves, but indeed to be authentic and true sheep. Our Lord concludes this section on the Sermon of the Mount with some chilling, harrowing words.

Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father, who is in heaven. In other words, name-dropping God and lukewarm

commitment are not enough.

At the end of the world, before the seat of Christ's judgment, we will not be able to appeal by saying things like this, Of course I'm a Christian. I'm on the church mailing list.

Or, of course I'm a Christian. I gave some leftover money to the church after I paid for everything else. Or, of course I'm a Christian. I went to church when it was convenient.

[ 4 : 53 ] Or, yes, I'm a Christian, of course, because I prayed when I was in trouble. I don't want to be a fanatic about all of this. Those are what some of the responses will be.

And even this is not good enough. Of course I love you, Lord. I got myself ordained. I even joined the continuing church. That's not going to be enough.

The Lord Jesus will judge us on the basis of whether or not we actually sought God's will. How do we find the will of God? How do we energetically and actively engage in seeking the will of God? Rooting ourselves in the Holy Scriptures. And then asking the Holy Spirit to apply to our hearts and lives what the Holy Ghost has given us to understand from the word of God.

That is where we begin to find the divine purpose. This is where we begin to find God's will. Now, God is not going to count it against us if we fail.

[ 5 : 57 ] But He is going to count it against us if we don't try. So we have to keep trying. We must seek God's will intentionally, willingly, willfully, and actively.

That will be the basis of our judgment at the end of the world. Our epistle today reminds us, however, not to be afraid. If we allow the Holy Ghost to lead and guide us into all truth, into the will of God, we have nothing to fear.

St. Paul writes, You have not received the spirit of bondage unto fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption, whereby you cry, Abba, Father.

By their fruits we shall live. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.