

I am...Christian!

Luke 6:39-49

February 20, 2022 – Pastor Greg Pufahl

Who are you? I know, kind of a loaded question. But I am also sure that you have been asked that question before. The context of the question will dictate how you answer. Being asked that question in a job interview will probably result in different answer than if you were asked that question prior to your first date with someone.

Well, who are you? I am a... father/mother, husband/wife, son/daughter, neighbor, coworker. The list can go on and on. How about descriptive words? Who are you? I am smart. I am kind. I am a good...nope GREAT golfer. 😊

Most of those are easy to prove. Here are my children, therefore I am a father/mother. Here are my parents therefore I am a son/daughter. But if you want to prove the other ones, you need to do something more. Being smart would show itself, for instance, in a good report card. Being kind would show itself in how you treat others. Being a great golfer...well, you get the point (and please don't ask me to prove I am a great golfer...just take my word for it).

How about this description? I am...Christian! What does that mean? What does it mean to be Christian? And can you...prove it?!

No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. ⁴⁴Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. ⁴⁵A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

How does that section of Jesus' words make you feel? This entire section is Jesus reminding us that being a Christian is more than just checking a box at the hospital when they ask you if you have a church or not. Being a Christian is more than just going through a class to become a member at a specific church. Jesus shows us that being a Christian is having a living and active faith. It shows itself in action.

Think about the tree analogy. Notice Jesus says that the tree will BEAR good fruit. That is active. Jesus doesn't say that a good tree will just have good fruit. It is actually producing the good fruit. Do you produce good fruit? Do you have good things come out of the good which is stored up in your heart? Or, is sometimes your fruit a little rotten?

For my daily Bible reading, I have been working through the Psalms. I don't think it was a coincidence that as I was writing this sermon, I was at the same time reading through Psalm 51. If you don't know Psalm 51, this is basically David pouring out his heart to God. But, he wasn't thinking about his righteous fruit he was producing. The prophet Nathan had just visited him. You see, David was made king. In picking David, God said of him in Acts: **After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'**

Was that the purpose of Nathan's visit to David? To remind him that David was always doing what was God's will? No. David just had an affair. Covered it up through murder and as the murdered man's body was in a grave, David sat on his throne with the dead man's widow living with him. Nathan came to tell him about it. The result? Psalm 51. David's admission to having rotten fruit.

How is your fruit? Being a Christian is not just doing what we want when we want. "Oh, don't worry about that sin because Jesus has already forgiven it." Being a Christian means we don't desire to produce rotten fruit. However, do we sometimes even desire to produce rotten fruit? When the conversation turns to bad mouthing a person who coincidentally also has wronged you, do you defend that absent person? Or do you add to the gossip? When that immoral movie or show pops up on the screen do you turn it off or think, "Just 5 more minutes"? When you have a little animosity toward someone do you immediately go and try to heal the relationship even though it may cause some pain and anguish to do so, or do you do nothing and let that animosity fester into anger and even hatred?

What are all those? Good fruit? Or rotten? And then to add even more difficulty to being a Christian is the ACTIVE part of actually doing good! Not only are we to avoid the rotten fruit but we are to actively produce good fruit. Jesus gives

several examples of how that would look in our lesson. Don't look for the speck in your neighbor's eye as there is a plank in yours. A good tree will produce good fruit because that is what is stored up in your heart. A wise person will build on solid ground. He said: **As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. ⁴⁸They 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 could not shake it, because it was well built. ⁴⁹But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.**"

There was something else I was thinking about this week. What is church? Ok, another loaded question. What do I mean? Well, how do you see church and the purpose of church? Is coming to church a sign of active faith? Well, of course it is because anything we do out of love for Jesus is because of our active faith. But, is that really the purpose of church? I think there is actually a greater purpose for church. This is the place to receive rest and encouragement from Jesus FOR your active faith, to LIVE your active faith. If we say we are active in our faith but the only contact we have to Jesus and living that active faith is the one hour in church, do we really have an active faith? Isn't more of the active faith's actions out there (point outside of church) than in here?

So again, how active is your faith? And in your active faith, what kind of fruits are you producing? I don't know about you, but the law definitely has cut to my heart. Many times, especially when I preach on a weekend, I get done with church and think, "That was a long weekend! But, glad it's done!" And, when I look at my own fruit, I would have to admit it is so often rotten. How about you? Does it mean we have failed as a Christian? And, if so, is our faith dead and obsolete now?

I want to go back to David's story. He saw his sin. He saw his rotten fruit. He repented. So, God said, "I'm done with you!" right? No, in fact the passage I read to you about how God felt about David and his heart came thousands of years after David died. God told Luke to write those words that David was a man after his own heart. How is that possible? Didn't David show what was in his heart through the wickedness he did? Yes, to a point. Then Nathan led him to see what his rotten fruit had become...rotten. No longer did he hide. He ran to God, pleaded for forgiveness. What did God do? Instantly gave him forgiveness.

How about us? We have already seen that none of us would think to bite into the fruit we produce because we know how rotten it would be. But, has the God who forgave David his sins, changed when it comes to you and forgiving you? I think you know the answer. God who forgave David is the same God who forgives you. How can God do that?

Through his Son Jesus. Jesus' heart was free from rotten fruit. Nothing nasty came from his lips or his heart. Instead, we hear what comes from his lips. As people falsely accused him, beat him, crucified him...his words were, "Father, forgive them." Those words are also spoken to and about you. "Father, forgive them!" At that cross, Jesus took the punishment for our lazy, inactive, rotten fruit producing faith. **The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.** ALL sin. Us, forgiven. He covers us in his blood from his perfect fruit producing heart.

You see, notice what I have been asking with the theme. I didn't say I am A Christian. I said I am...CHRISTIAN. Maybe that is a small detail, but I feel like it is important. I am not just an individual Christian in my description of me. But, I am covered under the umbrella of the title "Christian." That is a person who is a believer in Jesus, follower, and one who is completely dependent on and covered by Jesus himself. Not only covered, but Jesus planted a home right in your heart. He chose to live there. And since he is one who is living in us, he is the one doing the good deeds, bearing the good fruit. He is the good stored up in our heart.

That really is what the heart of a Christian is all about. It is one which trusts Jesus enough to follow him. When problems come, even when we from time to time produce rotten fruit, we can stand strong. Not because we are strong. But because we are CHRISTIAN – a person who completely depends on Jesus who has made us perfect and made our fruit perfect. One who depends on Jesus who will guide our lives and what we do until he shares his home of heaven with us. A faith which depends on Jesus...that is a living, active Christian faith. So, who are you? You can proudly say to that: I am...Christian.

Amen