

## The Real Thing

As we read through these scriptures and see all the many cautions and warnings that the Lord Jesus gives to us concerning the conduct and the behaviors of the many people that we interact with each day, we need to also be careful to recognize and to accept that Jesus is not only speaking about those other people, He is also giving many of those same cautions and warnings about ourselves, exhorting us to be careful to examine and to make changes to our own behaviors.

That same exhortation is given to us in the second epistle to the Corinthians in chapter 13 where the Lord, through the words of the Apostle Paul admonished those church goers of that day, and consequently you and me of our day to,

<sup>5</sup> Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?— unless indeed you fail to meet the test! (2 Corinthians 13:5)

Put bluntly, God wants you and me to not only be able to clearly recognize the sinful behaviors of other people, but to also be able to see clearly where we ourselves are falling short of His precious holiness.

Thankfully, here in this church, being a small congregation, we each have given witness of a clear and convincing profession of faith in Christ. And because that is so, the messages that I give to us each week are preached with that understanding.

But from the words of this scripture passage that I'll read for us in a moment, God is still exhorting each of us to regularly examine ourselves and make sure that our behaviors actually bespeak our Christian testimony, and that we intentionally strive to get past the stage of a "want-to-be" Christian on into the "real thing".

And no, such times of examination should not cause you or me to have doubts or fears about our salvation. If we have truly given our hearts to Christ, then these kinds of questions should only serve to make us more confident about our eternal relationship with the Lord Jesus.

And as we are reminded in scripture passages such as 1 John 5:13, we can always know with a certainty of our eternal salvation. Listen,

<sup>13</sup>I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:13)

Those words, "that you may know that you have eternal life", speak about a "certainty" of our confidence.

And may I also add that I've found that, just as with any love relationship, comfort and assurance comes only as we intentionally and continually draw up close in our intimacy. And that is especially so with the Lord Jesus.

And also folks, these scriptures are clear on the matter of our salvation. Once we are truly saved, we can never be "unsaved". We will always remain within the powerful saving Hands of God.

With all this being said, may I pause for a moment and read these words of scripture given in Luke chapter 6. Follow along with me as I read, beginning in verse 39.

<sup>39</sup>And He (the Lord Jesus) spoke a parable to them, "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?"

<sup>40</sup>A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.

<sup>41</sup> And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the log in your own eye? <sup>42</sup>Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the log from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye.

<sup>43</sup>"For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. <sup>44</sup>For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush.

<sup>45</sup>A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. (Luke 6:39-45)

As I've thought through the questions that these words provoke, I've been reminded of all the many ways that we, in this generation, struggle with the simple ability to look within ourselves and to recognize with honesty and humility who we really are.

There seems to be a deep-seated need within each of our hearts, our personalities, our egos, to be more than we really are. And for some, that need is irrepressible. And that need comes to the surface often, seeming to show itself the most within our conversations. By our using pretentious words, we defend some of our questionable behaviors, and with other words we seek to elevate ourselves to be someone that we want to be, rather than the person that we really are.

And that kind of behavior is not a new phenomenon or desire. It's been a problem for us since the beginning of time. It was especially present within the ill-chosen decisions made by both the devil as he rebelled against God and also within the hearts of Adam and Eve as they rejected God and chose their own path.

In today's culture, with the advent of the internet and of social media, there are many people who strive to rise above their position in life and to become what that internet world calls "influencers". They are bloggers and YouTubers and other such website talkers who seek to gain great numbers of followers and subscribers both for the purpose of influencing them in the way they are to think, and to also make money off their website visits.

And while the ambition to do such things and to make a good living financially is not necessarily a bad or a sinful thing, I find questions arising in my own mind about this thing those folks call "influencing".

Is their kind of influence a good thing? And if you follow their influence, is that a good thing for you, or is it perhaps just the blind leading the blind.

They seem to be able to clearly "see the speck in other people's eyes", but what about the "log" in their own eye.

As I have questioned these things in my mind, I have recognized that "influencing" is something that we preachers do every Sunday from these pulpits. And then as I post these messages on my website, I am doing much the same as those other "influencers".

And as I've pondered these things, more than ever before, I've been reminded by God's Holy Spirit, that I had better be sure of who I am in Christ and that any

“influencing” that I do had better be to “influence” people towards the Lord Jesus.

Considering the impact of the internet, with all of its attending contributors, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and all of the multitudes of websites, the internet has, for this generation, become the most influential source of information imaginable.

By hiding comfortably behind their computer screens, bloggers and YouTubers and other influencers can be, or at least they can pretend to be, anyone they want to be. But for us who might choose to follow them, we won't know whether they are the “Real Thing” or whether they are just “want-to-bes”. We often can't know the difference.

May I give us one more circumstance to consider involving whether we are the “Real Thing” or whether we are just “want-to-bes”, one that I experienced personally.

It involves a social opportunity that I had to attend and to enjoy a speech and a \$1,000 a plate fundraising dinner during George W. Bush's first campaign for the presidency in 2000. Sitting around a table with other men in gray and pin-striped suits, I probably looked very much like them, a wealthy contributor who could give far more than the \$1,000 to assure that George Bush got elected.

But even though I might have looked very much like those other men, I really wasn't one of them. My gray suit came out of a clothing contribution box at French Camp and my \$1,000 plate of food was sponsored by one of our gracious Board of Trustees members.

And folks, that sort of opportunity and circumstance took place on other occasions, my wife and I attending a Super Bowl Game and eating in the finest of restaurants. And it seemed relatively easy to blend in with a group and look very much like the “real thing”. But the reality was, I was really nothing like those folks. At best, I was nothing more than just a “want-to-be”.

So then, where do these stories lead as it relates to our bible text for today? It's this. Across our nation and across our world today, there are many, many people living within a world of illusion, yes doing real things and living real lives, but participating in an illusion of what they “want-to-be”.

And unfortunately, it is obvious that that same illusion is taking place with many people who, each week, sit comfortably within the pews of many of our Christian churches each Sunday. They are fully participating in all that is taking place, doing similar things as the other worshipers, singing songs, saying "Amen" at all the proper times, some even raising their hands in worship. But the sad truth is that they are not really the same. They might want to be the "real thing", but they are not. They are just "want-to-bes".

And even more unfortunately, most of them don't know that they are not the "real thing". Theirs is only a hopeful illusion.

But my dear friends, you and I cannot allow such things as these to be the reality of our lives. We must never allow ourselves or our families to get caught up in the ways and the behaviors of this world, becoming pretending "want-to-bes". And that is especially so as it concerns who we are in Christ.

All of those other things and activities of this world and this life, they are temporary, important perhaps, but temporary. But not so for our Christian life! The things of God are eternal and they hold eternal consequences.

So, above all else, you and I must never allow ourselves to believe that we are the "real thing" as a Christian, if in fact, we are not. Listen to these words of warning from the Lord Jesus given in Matthew chapter 7.

<sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

<sup>22</sup> On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' <sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of iniquity.' (Matthew 7:21-23)

Folks, these are some of the most fearsome words ever spoken by the Lord Jesus. And as we said a moment ago, some, perhaps many of the people who are sitting within church pews today are in this condition, but they don't know it. They have settled into and accepted a condition of "make believe" Christianity and have gone no further.

For the most part, they really want to be Christians, but have somehow gotten off onto a wrong path, that path that these scriptures call “the broad path that leads to destruction”.

But how does that happen? How is it that some people who seem earnestly to desire the salvation that Christ offers, reach only to a certain level of belief and go no further. How is it that they get a brief “taste” of the Christian life, but never really become the “real thing”?

Their condition in many ways seem similar to the first three soils in the “Parable of the Sower”, having the “seeds of salvation” sown within their hearts, even believing for a while. But still wanting the treasures offered to them by the world, the flesh and the devil, they never quite enter into the door of salvation, or if they do, they only barely get inside.

Jesus gives us more of the answer to that question here in this passage. Sometimes, along our journey towards a Christian life, we fall in behind and begin to follow “blind guides”, trusted counselors who themselves do not know the way.

Unfortunately, folks, it is often the case that our first misguidance, or at least our lack of guidance, begins within our own homes, from our dearly beloved parents. If they themselves do not have an intimate relationship with Christ, they have no ability to encourage, direct and instruct us in ours. And so, from our earliest ages, it becomes a case of the blind leading the blind. That was so in my own family with my dear father.

And most unfortunately, the same misguidance is also present within many of our church settings. As our hearts are first being drawn to Christ, church and church leaders are our first hope. But if those church leaders do not themselves really know the truth, if they themselves are not the “real thing”, then once again, it becomes a case of the “blind leading the blind”. Verse 39

<sup>39</sup>And He spoke a parable to them: “Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch? (Luke 6:39)

In Jesus’ day, those “blind guides” were the Scribes and Pharisees. Today, we have our own versions of Scribes and Pharisees. They fill the pulpits, and Boards of Deacons and Elders across many of our denominations, “blind guides” leading the way.

And further, in verse 40 of our passage, we see the necessity for discipleship to quickly follow along after a person first gives their heart to Christ. There we read,  
**40** A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.

Folks, there is great danger for the person who gets just a taste of the truths of Christ, but does not have another more seasoned genuine Christian to come along side and disciple them. To have only a bare understanding of the truths of God is not enough.

Again, unfortunately, this is where so many "want-to-be" Christians settle in and go no further. And as we see in these next words, knowing very little, those "want-to-be" Christians seem to be the first to proudly criticize others, and are willing to argue points of scripture that they don't understand. Listen!

**41** Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? **42** How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye. (Luke 6:41-42)

Note in these words that the Lord Jesus calls the "want-to-be" Christians "Hypocrites". A hypocrite is someone who pretends to be someone they are not.

May I again emphasize the importance of our clearly understanding who we are in Christ. When we are truly in Christ, and not just a "want-to-be", the Holy Spirit helps us to realize our utter need for humility, both towards Christ, but also especially towards other people.

The need for humility is one of Jesus' most important instructions to us. He tells us in Matthew chapter 11,

**28** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

**29** Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am humble and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:28-29)

The pride that brings us a critical spirit towards others, goes away as we begin to give up who we mistakenly think we are, and begin to be who the Lord Jesus really wants us to be.

Folks, I cannot stress this enough. We must not allow ourselves to settle into a condition of a “want-to-be”. The new person that we have become in Christ, must be allowed to grow and to thrive in Him. And if we do that, we will not only ourselves thrive, we will be able to help and to influence others to thrive also. Listen to these words beginning in verse 43.

<sup>43</sup> “. . . no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, <sup>44</sup> for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. <sup>45</sup> The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. (Luke 6:43-45)

Folks, we truly do need to examine ourselves carefully and to know who we truly are in Christ. Are we the “Real Thing”, or are we still just a “want-to-be”. As these words tell us, others can see us, and they know what our behavior shows to them. Do they see a “good tree” or do they see a “bad tree”.

Are we one of the ones described in these words as being a “good person with a good heart”. Folks, we need so very much to be that “good person” that Jesus speaks about here. Why? It's because we really are “influencers”, influencing other people daily. And as Jesus tells us in these last few words of this passage,

<sup>45</sup> The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. (Luke 6:45)

This is real truth folks. As you and I speak, our mouths reveal the real truth about who we really are.

And so, I exhort each of us to carefully consider who we are in Christ, and to know our responsibility to Christ, and to know the responsibility we have towards others as we strive to “influence” them.

These words again and we'll close . . .



<sup>45</sup>The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. (Luke 6:45)

May we pray!