

Luke 6:43-49

Sermon: **Sermon on the Mount #6**

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JESUS PROVES THE SOUNDNESS OF DOCTRINES THROUGH NARRATIVES

1. (Luke 6:43–45) For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For people do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil person out of the evil brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.

1.1. Again, these are strong statements from our Teacher. Much could be said about these verses, but since our theme is “Who will inherit the Kingdom of God,” we will stay on the main tracks that lead to that answer. I will again use a story to try to explain what Jesus meant by these statements, but this time I will use His story—the one He told His people. The reason is twofold: first, so that you yourselves can see that my stories run side by side with Jesus’ teaching; second, so that you can see what truly matters—by which I mean this: Christian denominations have, throughout history, criticized one another for their theological convictions (doctrines). Their leadership likewise taught these same convictions to the members within their communities, so that many ordinary believers, throughout history, expressed their resentment toward believers from other communities because of their theological beliefs. In other words, the doctrines of some have sadly always been a sword—an excuse to harm the “enemy” in their eyes.

1.1. What about Jesus? How did He do it? Unlike the Christian denominations, Jesus used real-life stories of individuals to prove that the theological convictions of the Pharisees—and of His own people—were wrong. Just to note, the Pharisees, like Christian denominations, arranged their theological convictions (doctrines) into a system of belief, and unfortunately, because of them they often injured, condemned, and pressured those who neither believed nor practiced those convictions in their lives.

1.2. Let’s see how Jesus confronted both His people and the religious leadership with the fact that their convictions were mistaken. In Luke 10:25–37 we have a dialogue between a lawyer and Jesus,

where Jesus answers the lawyer's pressing question: *"Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"* Jesus urges him to answer from Moses' Law what he must do. The lawyer replies—and he answers well—but that doesn't mean he lived it. It doesn't mean he truly understood what God was asking of him through those commandments.

1.3. Why do I think so? Because the commandments of Moses, wrongly learned and wrongly interpreted by the Pharisees, easily led a person to select who counted as his neighbor and who did not. Many did this; many failed to show goodness to those in need simply because lawyers, Pharisees, and members of the Pharisaic sect had categorized them as "non-neighbors." Knowing this, Jesus chose to tell the story of the Samaritan. And before we enter the text, let me give a brief introduction.

1.4. Samaritans were a second-class people in the eyes of the Jews, and the Jews hated them on both national and religious grounds.

— One goes with the other, doesn't it? Sadly, history proves it. —

1.5. All right, let's continue. The Jews believed themselves superior to the Samaritans in their knowledge of Scripture—and in fact they were, because the Samaritans accepted only the first five books of the Old Testament, while the Jews accepted the whole Old Testament. Which meant that, in a Jew's eyes, if you didn't believe in the Holy Temple, if you didn't belong to the Pharisaic movement, if you didn't accept the whole Torah (the Old Testament), it was as if you didn't believe in the one true God.

1.6. For all these reasons, the Samaritans were a hated people to the Jews. Why? Because the Jews believed their theological convictions were the foundation of salvation for every Jew who embraced them; and since the Samaritans had rejected them over time, they were not only enemies of the Jews but enemies of God. Roughly speaking, this is how Jews felt in their hearts about Samaritans: *"We are superior in our knowledge of who God is; they do not know who God truly is, and therefore they do not have the foundation of salvation that we have."*

1.7. On the other hand, the Samaritans did the same—they believed that their choice, that is, which books were the true Holy Scripture, was the foundation of their salvation. And for that reason, they hated the Jews equally. Nothing new under the sun, dear friends—the church has been doing the same to itself for hundreds of years, sadly.

1.8. With that said, Jesus enters the scene and, through a story, gives an answer to His people, to the Samaritans, and to us. Who is the one who will inherit the Kingdom of God? Who is the person of a good heart, and who the person of an evil heart?

THE GOSPEL IS LIVED EVERY DAY—OR NOT AT ALL

2. Notice that in His story Jesus does not put theological convictions on the table. He doesn't say, "If you believe these doctrines, you'll be saved," or "If you belong to this movement, you'll be saved," or "If you know Scripture better than others, you'll be saved." No—that is not how Jesus disarms His

fellow countryman as He answers the question. He teaches him that the life of the Gospel is something lived every day—or not lived at all—and the decisions of the people in the story prove it.

2.1. On one side we have the great spiritual leaders of Israel—men who, in the eyes of the people, were the example to follow if you wanted to be one who would inherit the Kingdom of God. On the other side we have a Samaritan, likely an ordinary man traveling to another city for business.

2.2. We can assume the Samaritan was not as immersed in Scripture as the other two. Let's add this as well: like the Jews, he had been taught by his own teachers to hate the other side. Yet he chose to do what is right in God's eyes; he chose to *love his neighbor*—not because he felt an intimate love for the man, but because he knew it was righteous before God.

— He is a man who grieves over his own hatred, aware of his shortcomings, aware that he is poor in spirit. His life has shown him that he is an unjust being, one who too easily desires harm for others—but unlike most, he listened to his conscience. —

2.3. Over the course of his life, unlike the religious leaders, the Samaritan began truly to love God's vision of righteousness—even though he had only the five books of the Old Testament. And when you are blessed, when you are chosen, when God gives you a new heart—that is enough.

— Dear friends, remember what I'm about to say: it is enough to know and believe only the five books of the Old Testament—and that does not hinder God from making you an heir of His Kingdom. Indeed, even if you do not know a single book, if you do not understand the laws or the prophecies, that is no obstacle to God. For if He wants you in His Kingdom, there you shall be. He is God—nothing is impossible for Him. —

2.4. All right, back to the scene. I can only imagine how this story resounded in the ears of the lawyer and the others listening. Through this parable Jesus is saying: *"Not only will Israel's religious leaders not enter the Kingdom, but neither will those who follow them. The one who will enter is your enemy—the one you wish evil upon. And why will he enter? Because he is the blessed one; his heart shows that God has chosen him to be an heir of His Kingdom. Everything is in God's hands, my people—and the decisions we make in various life situations, when we find ourselves willing to help despite our convictions telling us, 'Do not help; hate,' can mean only one thing: it means you are chosen."* In other words, Jesus says that our fruits are the proof of whether we are people of a good heart or an evil heart.

2.5. Before we move to the next verses, I want to share one more thing with you: a good man, in the biblical sense, does not mean he is incapable of doing evil—he very much is, and if we are honest, we all do evil. But our hearts will condemn us for it, and over time we will become more and more like that Samaritan. We will not allow our sinful nature constantly to rule us; we will fight against it "to the shedding of blood," as the apostle Paul says.¹ In our desire to show the fruits of righteousness, we will strive and tell it to step aside; we will declare that here and now our God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ reign.

¹ Hebrews 12:1–4 — the context of these verses is faithfulness to Christ, not literal self-inflicted suffering to the point of shedding blood.

FIRM FOUNDATIONS

3. All right, let's continue. **(Luke 6:46–49)** Now why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.

3.1. Jesus tells His people that it is not enough merely to say aloud, "*Jesus is my Teacher!*" or, in our day, "*Jesus is my Savior!*" We must be proactive; our fruits must first and foremost be proof to ourselves that we are blessed. If we do not have good fruits—if, over time, we do not see ourselves becoming conformed to the image of God's righteousness—then it can mean only one thing: "We are not blessed; we are the person who built his house on sand. In other words, when life stages trouble for us, our faith will prove false."

3.2. But if our fruits are good fruits, then we are the person who built his house on the rock, and when troubles come, we will stand firm in faith—not because we are stronger or better, not because we read Scripture more, prayed more, or went to church more often. No—not for that reason, but for one reason alone: "Because we belong to God the Father."

3.3. Even if we wanted to run from Him because of the trials we endure, we will not be able to! On the contrary, we will love Him in the hardest moments; we will call on His Name and the Name of His Son precisely when we "least feel like it." He will bring us to the end of the road; He is the One who, through our good fruits, will confirm that He is on our side and that no trouble in this world can separate us from the sovereign will of our Father. And why? Because we are blessed, because we are His children; we do not belong to this world—we belong to Him, and to Him alone.

3.4. And what I'm saying here goes hand in hand with Jesus' statement in Matthew 7:21: "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." And who will do the Father's will? The one who is blessed. Only he will be able to live out the fruits of true God-righteousness—not because he is that way in himself, but because God, by His grace, has given him such a life. I repeat: it is *grace*; it does not come from us!

3.5. I got a little carried away—and rightly so; my Father deserves it! We are slowly coming to the end of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, but before we finish, I want to lay out a few conclusions, under:

- a) I believe that those will be blessed who believe in Jesus and the Bible, but also those who never had the opportunity to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ—or heard it misrepresented and therefore rejected it. In the Gospel accounts we see that the Pharisees misrepresented their God—to their own people and to the rest of the world. The apostle Paul criticized them in his letters for this very reason: because of them, God's Name was often proclaimed falsely.²

² Romans 2:23-24

History likewise shows that the church many times misrepresented God's Name. Over the centuries, nations committed evil in the name of Christ and God; because of our false, human visions of righteousness, we repeatedly harmed one another... so I ask: "Why should those who might want to enter the kingdom of heaven listen to us—when throughout history our fruits have prevented them from doing so?" With our shameful Christian fruits we have often misrepresented our Lord Jesus and His Gospel—just as Israel did back then. Why, then, do we think we have the right to say, *"I told them Jesus' Gospel; they did not receive it—therefore they will not inherit eternal life"*? Really? Do we truly think we can claim that? We are not in our right mind if we think so... There are too many variables in life, too many inexplicable events throughout history—both in individual lives and universally. We are too small. It is impossible for us to know the entirety of someone's life and all the reasons behind their decisions. Therefore, I believe we can only patiently observe the people around us and recognize them by their fruits. The fruits will expose them. Only then—perhaps—may we say, *"He/she will inherit the Kingdom of God."* Anything more than that would be arrogant.

3.6. Why do I believe this way at all? Because Jesus' description of those who will be blessed lies in the stories I have cited: they portray the heart that will be blessed, not alignment with particular doctrines. That means you do not have to be a Christian to be blessed. I believe that in God's Kingdom we will see Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, etc., etc. And why? Because our fruits are what God seeks of us; and if God places His Spirit within a person, then wherever he is and from whatever tradition he comes, he will reflect God's image—he will carry out God's righteousness in his life. Thus, even if in this life he has not known Jesus, he will inherit the Kingdom of God.

3.7. And one day, when he sees Jesus—when He returns a second time—that person will, in an instant, realize that his heart had belonged to the Lord Jesus all along; he will bow the knee and honor his King, his Savior, his Brother by God's grace.

3.8. My belief in all of this flows from the Spirit — from the eyes to see and the ears to hear — which God Himself has given me. It springs from the teaching of Jesus Christ and His apostles, from the stories I have personally witnessed, from the stories I have read in the pages of history, from the testimonies I have heard firsthand from those who lived them, and finally from the stories of the heroes of faith in the Old Testament — Abraham, Moses, David, Joseph, Sarah, Job, Zechariah, Eve. What many of them share is this: they never heard about Jesus Christ, and yet, in their lives, they promoted the righteousness of God. In other words, in the stories that God — as the Author — had written for them, they walked with Him by faith.

And one day, when they rise together with all of us, when they see Jesus, they will understand that their hearts had belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ all along.

— I find it beautiful that the glory of salvation belongs to no movement that has ever existed: the glory of salvation belongs to God the Father alone—and He may give it to whomever He wills, whenever He wills... and He has given it, and He still gives it! —

Under:

- b) Throughout these sermons I have mentioned the great hardships of some, while others—amid another's trouble—had to decide whether they would help or not. What do I mean?

Great fruits matter, but small fruits are no less important. Please, do what I'm about to say: every day—every single day—make the effort to do one small fruit, one small good deed. If you're driving and see that no one is letting a car in from a side street—you stop. Give up your place at the bank to the arrogant man who cut in front of you and pretends nothing happened. Bake a cake for your husband even though he's asked for the same one for the hundredth time. Don't gossip about the neighbors when you gather for Sunday coffee with the family. Greet a stranger on the street and smile as you do it. Greet the lady who stands at the cash register all day and whom no one seems to notice; say a few kind words to her. Make breakfast for your wife even though she didn't wash the clothes you need for tomorrow's trip. Be patient with your children; play with them often; teach them to greet the elderly as you walk through town. When you see the elderly neighbor struggling with groceries, step in—carry her bags to the apartment, chat a bit, make her laugh; who knows when someone last gave her attention. When you cross the street and a car stops for you, a smiling wave—and you'll brighten the driver's day. There are thousands upon thousands of small fruits by which we can bring joy to our neighbor or wake him from spiritual passivity, and at the same time these fruits train us to become wiser beings—beings who want to live, breathe, and love every second of their existence... the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- c) Perhaps the Sermon on the Mount gave you the impression that I promote the idea that the foundation of our salvation will be our fruits. It will not. There is one foundation of our salvation: the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and what He did for us on the cross. But in order to understand what He did, we must pass through our own cross—that is, the life of faith. If we persevere in faith despite the troubles life will surely serve us; if we choose to do good despite the convictions of our culture that taught us to discriminate; if we recognize ourselves as poor in spirit; if we choose to do good even when our enemy hates us; if we weep when we see how we have missed the mark as human beings; if we accept God's will in our lives even when we do not like it—this is the sign that we understand Christ's cross and His grace. If, day by day, we love His commandments more and more, it means He will hold us by the hand as we go to meet our God and Father. In other words, our fruits will be the evidence to ourselves that God has chosen us—that He has given us the heart of His Son, a heart that brings forth good from a good treasure. And thus, on Judgment Day, Jesus will say: *"Because of the love that Filip, Renata, Danijel, Sandra showed through their fruits toward Me and toward You, Father, I want them to be my brother/sister in Your Kingdom and Mine,"* and the Father will say, *"Yes, Son!"* And why? As great as the cross of Christ is in the eyes of Christians who truly believe in Him and in the meaning of the cross, in the eyes of God the Father it bears even greater weight. Why do I think so? Because the Son was obedient to His Father to the point of death on a cross; therefore Jesus has the Father's ear. The Father listens to His Son when He says: *"Because of what I have done, Father—because I went to the cross, above all to glorify Your Name—I ask You: let into Your Kingdom those who have good fruits; let them be my brothers and sisters in the Kingdom You have prepared for us."*
- d) I do not want you to think that doctrines are unimportant — they are very important, if they are authentic biblical doctrines — but they are not the foundation of our salvation, at least not in the way the Church often believes. By that I mean statements such as: "If you believe in the Holy Trinity, you will be saved," or "If you believe in eternal hell, you will be saved," or "If you believe in the Name of Jesus Christ, you will be saved," or "If you belong to our

denomination and follow our teaching, you will be saved,” and so on. Doctrines are indeed important in the life of a believer, and in a certain sense, they are part of the foundation of salvation. When we believe in biblical doctrines, they give us a *key* for interpreting every event in Scripture; and when we understand the context of a given event, that *key* helps us unlock the idea the author wanted to communicate all along. When the idea becomes clear, we know what we must do if we want to inherit the Kingdom of God. So — in that sense — they are part of the foundation of our salvation.

- e) Stay where you are, remain in whatever Christian denomination you belong to. To promote God’s vision of righteousness, you do not need to leave your tradition and join another. God has placed us where He wants us to promote His goodness. Let us separate what is essential from what is not. As long as we live in this world — a world ruled by the views of our cultures and by human visions of righteousness — we cannot escape them or hide from them. Therefore, let us stand firm where we are and promote God’s vision of righteousness, even if it costs us. Let us promote it within our own tradition, but also beyond it. Let us love those our denomination refuses to love; forgive those who refuse to forgive us; be kind to those who hate us; testify to God’s grace to everyone who asks about it — never withholding it simply because they believe in different doctrines than ours; let us defend the oppressed whenever we have the opportunity to do so. Let us not exalt ourselves above those who do not yet know Jesus Christ; let us show them through our fruits what it looks like when someone truly loves the teaching of Jesus. Let us weep and ask forgiveness from those whom we, through history, have harmed; let us not defend ourselves when someone attacks us before others; let us not use the same tools of intimidation they use against us. Let us not measure others or say, *“He or she surely will not inherit eternal life.”* Let us resist that thought. Instead, let us help them see how much more beautiful life with Christ is. Let us be patient, even when their fruits show that they have no interest in what we say. Let us be steadfast and patient with them — just as our Father is patient with us.

3.9. We can do all this wherever we are. Therefore, remain where you are and serve God the Father and our Savior Jesus Christ. Glorify Their Names through your good fruits — the fruits of a good heart, a heart given to you as a gift from God the Father.