LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

Matthew 12 (Part 4) :33-37

A Tree and Its Fruit

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · April 18, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Grab your Bibles, open them up to Matthew chapter 12. This morning we are completing a section of this chapter where Jesus is having a conversation with the religious leaders, the Pharisees. They have just made a very, very serious accusation toward him that he is in cahoots with the devil and that is why and how he is actually delivering people from demonic possession. Jesus has already responded to that. We've dealt with the issue of that response.

We've dealt with the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. We've talked about that and what it's all about. Now Jesus is going to get to the root of what the Pharisees are all about. I love how Jesus does that. I love how his word gets to the root, don't you?

I mean, when I read through the scripture, when I hear others teaching from the Bible, I can see from the word that God is exposing what's at the root of things. He's going to do that with the Pharisees. You might say, well, that's an interesting sort of an approach. However, I don't see any Pharisees here today and that is true but there are some things here that we're going to learn that are very applicable to our own lives about what's at the root, what's at the heart of what's going on in our lives and so forth. He says, if you look with me in chapter 12, we're picking it up in verse 33 and down to 37, it says, make a tree good and its fruit will be good or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad for a tree is recognized by its fruit.

You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words, you will be acquitted and by your words, you will be condemned.

Stop there if you would, please. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, open our hearts and teach us and help us, Lord, not just to understand this passage but also how to apply it, how to know, how to connect the dots

and put this into practice in our lives. Lord, you know us and everything about us and we pray that you'd speak to each person according to right where they are. We ask it in Jesus' precious name.

Amen. Amen. We are not strangers to this idea that Jesus is presenting here in this passage about the idea of fruit being the means of identifying a tree. You'll remember that back in Matthew 7, seems like an eternity ago when we were there, but in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus dealt with this issue by saying that the church would have false prophets who would invade it from time to time. They would be very difficult to distinguish from the rest of the body of Christ.

He said that they would look like sheep, they'd talk like sheep, they'd smell like sheep, but the fact of the matter is they would be wolves in sheep's clothing. And he said, really, the only way you're ever going to be able to figure out who they are or what's under the fleece is by their fruit, he said, because that's how you recognize a tree, by its fruit. You look at its fruit and you say, you know, okay, I know now what this tree is. Same thing with individuals. So, once again, Jesus turns to this idea of fruit-bearing being the revealer of the inner workings of the heart, but, you know, rather than just repeating himself in chapter 12 from what he did in 7, he actually adds some interesting additions of understanding to this whole idea of fruit and what's behind it and so forth.

And one of the first things that we need to look at, it's a key to understanding this passage, is in verse 33. So, I want you to look at it with me again in your Bible. And it says, make a tree good. Did you notice that? And then he says, the outcome will be, you know, then you'll have good fruit.

And then he said, make a tree bad and you will find bad fruit. Well, that kind of got me. As I was looking through this, I thought, make a tree good. Wait a minute, that's an interesting phrase. How do you make a tree good or make a tree bad?

I mean, isn't a tree just what it is? It's either an apple tree or an orange tree or a banana tree or a coconut tree or whatever it might be. A tree is a tree. How do you make it good or make it bad? So, I looked into the passage and I wanted to see if that word make was really part of the Greek or something maybe the English translators just threw in there to kind of make the sentence more understandable.

Well, it is right there in the Greek. The word that is translated make means to bring something to pass or to be the cause of something. All right? So, Jesus is saying to bring this, to make a tree and bring it to pass to be a good tree or to be a bad tree, dah, dah, dah, dah, dah. And he goes on.

Well, I got to thinking about that. I thought, wow, how do you do that? How do you actually cause a tree to be good or cause a tree to be bad? Right? Well, there are keys and as we keep reading, Jesus keeps unlocking information.

So, we read on in the next verse and we say, okay, what do we see there? Verse 34. It's really, if you got the NIV on your lap just like I do, it's in the first four words. You brood of vipers. There's the key of how you can make a tree good or bad.

Well, in this case, bad. But let me just kind of bring out that word brood. When's the last time you used the word brood? You might have used it for like I brood a cup of coffee, but that's a different kind of a brood. Or he's brooding, you know, because he was punished.

That's a different kind of brood too. This is a word that we don't use very much anymore. My mother used to use it and probably still does. But if, you know, years ago, you might hear someone say, oh, here comes Mrs. Johnson and her brood.

Okay? What you're saying is, here comes Mrs. Johnson with her children. Okay? The whole flock, you know, sort of a thing.

Technically, we really use the word to describe animals more than we do people, but it is used of people from time to time. So, anyway, what Jesus is saying here when he says, you brood of vipers, is he saying, you offspring of vipers, snakes, and not just snakes in general, but the snake, the serpent, okay, the devil. Do you see what Jesus is doing? He's saying to the Pharisees, you children of the devil. How in the world can you bring anything good out of your mouths?

Because, you know, you are who you are. In fact, later on in the gospel, according to John, he actually comes right out and says it. Let me show it to you on the screen. It's from John 8. Look what it says.

He says, you belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He says, he was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there's no truth in him. He says, when he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. And so he says, basically, as his children, you do the same. Okay?

Well, so how is a tree made bad? Well, by being a child of the devil, and the way that's going to happen ultimately in people. By the way, this whole reference to trees, it all comes back to people because that's what Jesus is talking about. That's what he's referring to. And he's saying, essentially, that when someone

rejects the purpose of God and the will of God for their lives, and ultimately his son, Jesus Christ, then the tree is a bad tree.

And a bad tree is going to just bring out bad fruit. And that's pretty simple. So how does a tree get made good? Well, we have to do the opposite of being children of the devil, offspring of the devil. We have to be the brood of God.

We don't use that word brood when we talk about us. We talk about just children of God. We have to be a child of God. Well, somebody is essentially a brood of the devil when they reject God's purpose. So how does a person become a child of God?

Is it by going to church? No, not necessarily. How about reading your Bible? That doesn't make you a child of God. Even memorizing scripture doesn't make you a child of God.

Praying doesn't necessarily make you a child of God. The scripture is very clear about how we become a child of God. It's in John chapter 1. Here it is on the screen. It says, yet to all who did what?

Received him. To those who did what? Believed or believed in his name. He gave the right to become children of God. And he kind of reminds us here, this is not children born of natural descent.

This isn't children just because who came about because you have two parents. Or, you know, human descent. Or a husband's will but born of God all right, so this is how a tree gets made good You got to be born of God you got to be a child of God you got to be the brood of God if you will That's how you have a good tree so in other words It's a tree that is made good by grace By the unmerited favor of God right and so we can say with Paul like he says in 1st Corinthians chapter 15 By the grace of God. I am what I am It's not really the Popeye statement, but it's close He says by the grace of God I am what I am and this grace that came to me has not been without effect I am a good tree by the grace of God I am a good tree, and you know if you are in Jesus today. You can say with me.

I'm a good tree I'm a good tree. You know it's not and you're not bragging because you didn't do it You didn't make yourself a good tree You didn't work to pull yourself up by the bootstraps to be a good tree. You're a good tree by grace by birth You are a good tree all right now the potential is and notice I said that the potential is now you can bear good fruit Okay, the other person who's a bad tree. They can't bear good fruit right? But you and I can all right now.

Here's the thing we have to pay attention to Even though you're a good tree It doesn't mean we're we're always bearing good fruit all the time does it I mean unfortunately We mess up we blow it Things come

out of our lives out of our mouths That shouldn't that actually kind of betray some other reality, so we're gonna find out in this passage as we read further Why that happens I want you to look with me again at verse 34 where Jesus says to the Pharisees you brood of vipers How can you who are evil say anything good and then check this out for out of the overflow of the heart? the mouth Speaks that's a great verse And if that isn't underlined in your Bible it probably should be because it says in essence that the mouth reveals what's in the heart you know and It kind of betrays you well, but it's not a true betrayal. It's actually a representation. It's a Characterization when when your mouth opens up and things come out. That's what's in your heart That's what Jesus is saying and you know that's hard to hear Because we like to think that we say things because we don't mean them Like particularly in a time of emotion or something like that you get mad at somebody Have you ever noticed you can just it's so cool easy to be a Christian when things are going okay You know and and you look good.

I mean you look good to me You look good to yourself you know you look good to other people and then something happens somebody cuts you off in traffic or something like that and Suddenly there's things coming out of your mouth you haven't heard for years and you're making obscene gestures out the window and you're questioning someone's parentage and and and all all these things that go and and and and Then you kind of you get you kind of come to yourself and you go Wow, where'd that come from? Have you ever heard somebody say that they'll they'll blurt something out and they'll say oh, I don't know where that came from Well, Jesus tells you came from your heart From the abundance or the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks that's convicting isn't it? Because you and I like to think oh, I didn't mean that I really did and we'll tell people you know in the time of emotional Upheaval when we say things that are hurtful and offensive. We'll come back later on and say I didn't mean those things Well, I understand what you're saying in essence. You're saying I regret saying them But at the time you meant it because that was what was in your heart and I know emotions.

I don't think emotions Make you say things. I think they take away the boundaries That would otherwise keep you from saying what you're saying and boy words can be so hurtful campaign things that we let out in a moment of emotion can be Devastating to a relationship and probably everybody in this room knows exactly what I'm talking about Something you say that takes five seconds to come out of your mouth can take years to heal in terms of a relationship But make no mistake about it what comes out of our mouths is what's in our hearts and So what that tells us is if that's happening in my life then there's some hard things that I need to be before the Lord about and I need to be asking him to do that work of cleansing now Let me just let me say this to those of you that are new in the faith. I don't want you to feel condemned I really don't I got to tell you, you know When I came to Christ Which you know, I was when

I really started walking with Jesus, I mean seriously I was in my 20s and Before that time I let whatever I Wanted come out of my mouth and it was some of the rudest crudest vulgar Obscene language that you could imagine and It even embarrassed me back then But what really bothered me was that even after I came to Jesus I still had moments when that stuff still came pouring out and It wasn't just embarrassing now. It was discouraging Because here I was I knew that I was a born-again Christian I knew that I was my sins were forgiven and I was on my way to heaven But man, I sounded like I was the lost boy from the lost island of lost boys. I mean it just wasn't good and I Cried out to God Lord, you know just sanctify my tongue It's just awful, you know And you know, he was he was very gracious over a period of time and it took time of cleansing Do you know there's that renewal?

You know how the Bible talks about renewing your minds renewing your hearts? There's this time of being in the word being in Christian fellowship Letting the Word of God wash over us and letting a greater work of the Holy Spirit Bring Lordship into play in our lives and eventually, you know those things we see those things change in our lives But I wanted to specifically kind of tell that story for those of you who might be new or in the Lord and and I don't want you to feel condemned if you're having some slippage in that area of Letting things fly that shouldn't really aren't consistent with your Christian conviction Then then just bring those things before God, you know confess them Repent and turn to God and he will help you now if you're older in the Lord and you still have things like that slipping and flying Then if the shoe fits put it on Jesus said that's what's in your heart and you need to bring your heart to God just like anybody else that the same the same issue or the same What's the word I'm going through my mental thesaurus You know Thing that is needed for the brand-new believer is needed for you. Just bring it to God God This stuff is still in my heart out of the overflow of my heart my mouth speaks and it isn't that great You know what? Jesus is saying here. You can tell a lot about somebody from their language You can tell a lot You know language is something that Linguists can can tell where people are from they can tell what country they're from some of you might have Spoken with one of our elder Ian Fisher Some of you may know that he was born and raised in Scotland and he still carries some of his Scottish Language, you know when he talks about children talks about the wee little ones or the wee children and and he used to call me Up and say hey, I'll meet you at the Kirk You guys know what that means?

That's the church That's a Scottish word for church and it took me a lot of like Kirk who but he was saying I'll meet you at the church and it but it's the Kirk and so these are these are holdovers from his Scottish background now some people You can you can talk to them and you can find out what region they're from within a country, you know Oh, you're from the Midwest or oh, you're from Oh Philadelphia, it's got to be lower Philadelphia. In fact, I have nailed it down to the county you live in You live in Clark

County, Philadelphia, don't you because that's the way people say pop or something like that, you know It's really interesting. You can tell a lot about people, you know Well, Jesus says you can tell what's in their heart, too You can see what's in their heart you can literally it's a looking-glass-into The heart and that is Convicting for every single one of us, but just remember this just because you are a good tree It doesn't mean that you and I can't bring out bad fruit from time to time or bad things can't come and we're going to See in the scripture here as we go on why that happens, but you know James actually confirms this Dichotomy of speaking that can happen in the life of a believer. Look what he says in the third chapter of James He says with the tongue. We praise our Lord and Father and Also with that same tongue we curse men Right who?

and made in God's likeness. And he says, out of the same mouth come both praise and cursing. And then he concludes it by saying, my brothers, this should not be. In other words, this is completely inconsistent for a good tree to bear that kind of rotten fruit, right? This should not be.

It's like a grower, you know, walks up to one of his trees in his grove or whatever, and he looks at the, it's an apple tree. And it's like, this is rotten. This should not be. This shouldn't be, this should be good fruit. So why does it happen?

Well, the answer is revealed as we go a little bit deeper. Look at verse 35 with me. It says the good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him. That's key. And the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.

Those are the key phrases. I've made emphasis on them. It's stored up. Do you know that in the Greek, it literally means treasure. And some of your Bibles may actually say that the good man brings good things out of the treasure of his heart, of his life.

The evil man brings out evil things from the treasure, those things that have been treasured in his heart. So what it's saying here is that we, our language, our actions and so forth, but Jesus is specifically talking about language here. It comes out of what we've been treasuring in our hearts, what we've been storing up. What are you storing up? What are you putting in?

You know, even in the world, you can hear that phrase from time to time, garbage in, garbage out. You've heard that before. The world understands that principle. Garbage in, garbage out. Well, listen, the Bible says it goes both ways.

Yeah, you store garbage, you're going to get garbage coming out, but you store good and you're going to get good coming out as well. The output of our words is going to be good or bad, depending on what

the treasury holds, right? The treasury of our heart. King Solomon, who wrote the majority of the Proverbs, knew and understood this principle and he wrote about it. And in Proverbs chapter four, he said this, above all else, that means this is priority, guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life.

You guys know what a wellspring is? It is the source of all the wells that maybe are in a particular area. It feeds them. So if the wellspring is tainted with bad water or something, everybody's well is going to be tainted. Think of that wellspring as your heart and that all the other wells are the things that your life produces, the words that come out of your mouth, the actions of your life and so forth.

If the wellspring, if the heart is, is polluted, tainted, then everything, your words are going to be affected how you live, how you treat other people and so forth and so on. So he says, guard your heart because it's the source of life. Guard it. In fact, he says above all else, guard it. Boy, that's really putting a sense of priority there.

So what are we storing up or what are we treasuring in our lives? You know, the question could be reasonably asked, why is it that so many times the lives of born again Christians really don't look that much different from the lives of atheists? Why? Why is that? Why do the words that come out of Christians' mouths sometimes sound just like somebody who doesn't know God and doesn't want God in their lives?

Well, Christians, it's because of what we've been storing up in our lives, in our hearts, what we've been treasuring, putting into the treasury, if you will. You don't have to wait around to find out what's in somebody's treasury. Eventually, it's just going to come spilling out of their mouth and that's just the fact of the matter. So Jesus says, if you look with me now in verse 36, he says, but I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word that they have spoken. Stop there.

Now, let me just remind you that as Christians, we will not stand before God to be judged for our sin unto death. We know that because our sin has already been judged unto death and Jesus bore our punishment and our death on the cross. So we know that when the Bible talks about judgment, it's not talking for us about judgment unto death. But that doesn't mean we're not going to give an account. That doesn't mean we're not going to be judged in some respect, not unto death.

None of you in this room, if you are in Christ, are going to be judged unto separation from God. It won't happen. That's already taken place at the cross. But are you still going to be judged? Oh, yeah.

For how you've used your life, how you've used your words, how you've used your mouth, how you've used your gifts. We know there's judgment that still awaits even believers. Again, it's not a judgment unto

condemnation, but it's an accounting. Nonetheless, James tells us, in fact, you might remember James actually says, don't presume to be teachers, my brothers, for we who teach the word of God will be judged more harshly than others, right? That's believers.

So believers are still going to give an account for our words. And the Bible says, I'm going to be judged more harshly than you are, unless you're a teacher of the word too, in which case we're in the same boat. So that's just the way it is. Now, you'll notice that Jesus said here in this passage, that we would give an account for every careless word. If you have a different translation on your lap this morning, maybe like the new King James, your Bible says for every idle word.

And the word in the Greek literally means vain or empty. It means useless words, words that were just spoken for no reason. They did not build people up and encourage them. They did not instruct them. They did not warn them.

They were just empty, stupid words. Sometimes we think of being judged for the words that are bad, but what about the words that were just empty? There were just nothing words. We just talked. I mean, we talked to hear ourselves and that's what Jesus is saying.

He says, you will give an account for every empty, useless, just nothing word that was spoken. Wow. That's, you know, you think about how many words we waste in a given day talking about nonsensical things, when, you know, we could be talking about things that have eternal value. And ultimately Jesus says our words will tell the story. The last verse we look at here, once again, look with me at the verse 37.

It says, for by your words, you will be acquitted. And by your words, you will be condemned. Well, you might read that verse and think, wow, that's kind of harsh. But remember what he said earlier, your words reflect your heart. And so ultimately it's your heart, you know, that's at the root of it.

Remember what we said, we talked about the very beginning of this study. I said, Jesus is going to get to the root of things here. We think that, you know, I can say what I say, and it doesn't really reflect who I am. Jesus says, no, it does reflect who you are. It's the root of who you are.

We're getting to the, to the inside. We're seeing what's in our heart. And sometimes it's not real pretty, but it's something that we need to look at because there's some really serious and sobering things that Jesus says about this. A man's words, mirror his heart. They tell a story and by that story, you're either going to be acquitted or you're going to be condemned.

It's an interesting sort of a concept, isn't it? But I want to end this little exhortation with a passage from Ephesians chapter four. I'll put it on the screen here for you. It says, as a prisoner for the Lord, Paul writes then, which the better translation is, therefore, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Now, this is, this is the exhortation that should surround this whole thing we've been talking about, about how our lives represent Christ.

Do you know that in this passage where Paul uses the word worthy, I want you to live a life worthy of the calling that you've received. The word worthy in the Greek is a very interesting one. It means of equal weight. If you could think of it as a scale, okay? And on one side of the scale is your calling.

This is your calling in Jesus. And on the other side of the scale is how you live, the words that you speak and so forth. He says, I want those to be balanced. I want there to be a balance between your life and your calling. Don't let your calling be way up here and your life be way down here.

That's an imbalanced life. It's out of balance. Let it be here, right? So live a life in balance with your calling. Your calling is to follow Christ and to walk in holiness, to walk as he walked, to live as he lived.

So I want your life to be that way. understand that. Well, we understand now what's going to make a huge difference in our lives being in balance with our calling, don't we? It's what goes in our hearts. And so we need to take a good long look at the movies we watch, the books we read, the magazines we sit and thumb through, the music we listen to.

Oh, I don't listen to the lyrics. Yeah, right. I was a radio announcer for a lot of years. I know better. And we just, we got to look at those things.

We got to, you know, we got to ask ourselves, how much junk is going in? How much junk is coming out? And am I living my life in balance with my calling, my calling in Christ, or am I out of balance? And so we need to take a good long look at the movies we watch, the books we listen to, the magazines we listen to, and ask ourselves, how much junk is coming in? How much junk is coming out?

And am I living my life in balance with my calling, my calling in Christ, or am I out of balance? And so we need to take a good long look at the movies we watch, the books we listen to, and ask ourselves, how much junk is coming in? How much junk is coming out? And am I living my life in balance with my calling, my calling in Christ, or am I out of balance? And so we need to take a good long look at the movies we watch, the magazines we listen to, and ask ourselves, how much junk is coming out?

And am I living my life in balance with my calling, my calling in Christ, or am I out of balance? And so we need to take a good long look at the movies we watch, the books we listen to, and ask ourselves, how much junk is coming out? And am I living my life in balance with my calling, my calling in Christ, or am I out of balance? And so we need to take a good long look at the movies we watch, the magazines we listen to, and ask ourselves, how much junk is coming out? And am I living my life in balance?

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