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JUDGED BY OUR FRUIT

Jesus spoke a rather obscure and often poorly understood word that is found in Matthew 12:33 which says, ***“Either make the tree good, and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt, for the tree is known by his fruit.”***

Okay, so how do you determine whether a tree will be good with sweet fruit, or bad [corrupt] with bitter fruit that cannot be eaten? We are talking about the same type of tree, or as we would say, comparing “apples to apples” and not “apples to oranges,” a different kind of tree.

We grow a lot of orange trees where I live in Florida. People know very well the sweetness of an orange and its juice. They fail to understand what we must do in order to “make the tree good, and his fruit good.” It has nothing to do with fertilizing, watering, pruning, or other care given it. It has to do with the very nature of the mature tree. How so?

The original native Florida oranges are what we call “sour orange” or bitter orange.” Its fruit is so disgustingly bitter as to be considered inedible. The outside peel is covered with protruding bumps like tiny pimples all over it. Nobody wants this fruit or its thorny tree. Yet, it has some very durable traits. It is somewhat drought resistant, not needing to be watered and it is disease resistant. These are desirable qualities. These were the qualities of the original native trees. They still exist today.

So, how do we “make the bitter tree good?” We use the young bitter orange tree and use it as “root stock” which means we cut away all its branches down near the root ball, then we graft a young shoot from a sweet orange tree onto the remaining root ball and stub of the bitter orange tree. This grows into a sweet orange tree, the kind with which we are familiar.

All oranges sold in Florida and all trees in orange groves or backyards originated from the root stock of the sour orange.

So, it is also in God’s kingdom. All people are born with a sin nature, bitter to God’s taste. That nature bears corrupt, bitter fruit in people’s lives. When we accept Christ as our Savior, the old sin nature is pruned (cut) off, and we are grafted into the body of Christ so that we can produce fruit that is good and pleasing unto God.

What about Jesus’ parable of the vine that has unfruitful branches that must be pruned? (cut off and thrown into the fire) Well, orange trees (especially young ones) sometimes put out new “branches” called water sprouts. These branches will never bear fruit if allowed to grow. They will rob the nutrition (sap the life out) from the other good branches. These water sprouts (branches) must be cut off for the good of the tree.

So, it is with us, just like it is with the orange tree, we can grow into a bitter orange tree or sweet orange tree. We make the choice. We can live a life of sin and have a bitter eternity or choose the new life through Christ and have a sweet eternity.

That is the parable of how we make a “good tree” or a “corrupt” tree. We can judge the fruit by the nature of the tree.