

## ***Discerning***

**Date** 15 November

**Speaker** Joyce Edeki

**Passage** Matthew 7:13-23

*(Typed up from the speaker's notes)*

### **Your choice**

Jesus was teaching His followers in the famous Sermon on the Mount. This part of it teaches us about having or showing good judgement. In verse 13, Jesus talks about man's greatest dilemma: we have a choice to make about which gate to go in. The first option is the narrow gate – it is a hard, unpopular and straight path. The second option is the broad or wide gate, leading to the easy path. There are layers of meaning inherent in this dilemma or choice.

Verses 13 and 14 relate to our personal and individual choice to take the narrow path that leads to life even though it is hard and can be lonely. It involves preparing oneself with due diligence through the study of the Word and prayer; it involves keeping our eyes and gaze on Jesus, who walked the road to the Cross. Through this, we gain the strength and wisdom we need to keep going.

Verses 15 to 20 relate to the need to be discerning. Jesus warns His disciples of false prophets and explains how to recognise them.

### **Two Cities**

Jesus talks to His followers of two cities. In your mind's eye visualise these two cities as destinations. You and I must choose which to enter.

City One Destruction, Darkness and Death

It is the broad way, without strings, carefree. It is also careless and lawless. It is a place of darkness where we find the:

Person of darkness - the Devil (Eph 2:2 and 6:12)

Power of darkness – spiritual darkness which affects our thoughts, emotions and actions

Preference for darkness – we have a choice about what we engage in (John 3:19-21)

### City Two Light and Life

Here we find the things of the Spirit of God: hope, faith, trust, prayer, the study of the Word of God, fasting and humility. It is a place where people are careful, intentional, obedient; led by the Spirit of God and living in God's presence.

Romans 8:4 says, as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. As Christians, darkness should be in the past as we have chosen Jesus, the light. Our present is in light so let us walk in the light, with integrity in word and deed, into our future destination, which is light.

### **Discerning, Matt. 7:15-20**

As the children of God here on earth, (a place with all sorts) it is pertinent for us to be able to know, identify and differentiate or distinguish that which is right from that which is *nearly* right, not necessarily wrong. This ability is a skill which comes from studying and meditating on the Word of God and being guided by the Holy Spirit.

Discerning is the ability to exercise judgement rightly, so that we can identify false prophets from a place of knowledge (God's word) and make sound choices about who we listen to.

Jesus warns us to be aware, to know and get us challenged to know.

There is a tree analogy to help us identify those who are not truly walking with Jesus. A tree needs to be planted and tended so that it will develop strong roots and grow well. Then it will bear fruit. A good tree bears good fruit. An apple tree will always bear apples; a plum tree will always bear plums. By contrast, a bad tree produces bad fruits. A bad tree cannot produce something healthy, so it needs to be cut down and burned in the fire. (V. 19)

Bad fruits characterise or represent false prophets. Does their talk match their walk? Is their focus on themselves or on Jesus?

What kind of tree are you in your Christian walk? Healthy tree with healthy fruit or a bad tree with bad fruits?

John 15:1-7

As we produce fruit, God, the vinedresser prunes for more fruit. We are clean because of the Word of God. How much of the Word have you in your heart? This will influence your thoughts, your feelings and your actions every day. As we abide in Him, keeping His Word in our hearts, we will bear much fruit, because we will become mature children of God. We will keep walking, growing and being productive in God. We will keep loving God and loving our fellow believers, which is always pleasing to God.

### **Judgement, Matt. 7:21-23**

Prayer alone is not enough – we still need to live rightly and do the will of God. Works alone are not enough - our acts must flow from a place of worship within our hearts.

No lawless person has a place in God's city of light. Therefore, we must allow the power of the Holy Spirit to help us do God's will and fulfil God's plans and purposes. We need to exercise due diligence in being obedient daily, in being humble before our Holy God and in seeking guidance from His Word.

### **Conclusion**

Will your work stand the judgement that is to come by and before a holy God? Let us all ask for mercy and commit afresh to a life of obedience to Him, in reading the Word and being led by the Spirit now and always on this journey to the city of light.

Let us seek to be discerning as God instructs us to be, having integrity in word and action.

Prayer:

We come by the blood of Jesus for mercy.

Father, we invite the council of the Trinity, by Your Spirit, fill us a fresh.

Equip and empower us to make new choices, to be imparted by Your ability to discern false prophets.

To rely on the ongoing daily walk with the Holy Spirit; to be soaked in the Holy Spirit

To have understanding of Your Word, not just to know but to walk in Your will, purposes and plans.

Lord, equip us to bring forth much fruit to Your praise and glory' in Jesus' name, Amen.