

The Tree – Matthew 12:33

Over the past six months, I have taken part in a small group designed to help men be honest and real. First with themselves and then through sharing their truths with each other. The group is a safe place where men are not judged and isolated as is often seen in our world today. Each month, men show up looking for encouragement and looking to build stronger relationships which help them become all-in Jesus followers. One of the exercises we get to do each month is scripture memorization. During my preparation for last month's meeting, which was crammed into the last few days before we met, one of the memory verses was Matthew 12:33. This morning I want to share with you some thoughts surrounding this simple, but powerfully life changing verse. **Read Matthew 12:33.** Ever since July 23rd, which was the day of our meeting, I cannot stop thinking about this verse. It has challenged me in so many ways and if you spend some time researching, thinking, and meditating on its purpose, I believe you will be challenged too.

This verse may seem out of place and is often read hurriedly because we get caught up in the action of the chapter. A chapter where Jesus is confronting the Pharisees over several matters to which the Pharisees have taken issue with Jesus. Issues all related to the Law. Issues such as working and healing on the Sabbath and of course their concern over the source for His power. The Pharisees had 613 total laws, 365 negative and 248 positives. Now, it's important to understand that these questioning men were thought to be the best example of righteousness. They were the models of faithfulness and stood as living symbols for what was good. They were known as strict legalists who measured everything they did (and everyone else too) by keeping lists of rules and regulations that were far more restrictive in nature than the original laws given by God to Moses. To the average Jew standing by in observation of this interaction, praise for the Pharisee's would have been expected.

However, Jesus did not offer any praise to them at all. He rebuked their behaviors, as He often did, and bluntly condemned them because they had revealed the true nature of their hearts when they credited His miracle of healing to Satan instead of God. Let's look at this interaction. **Read Matthew 12:22-32.** Throughout this chapter Jesus confronts every challenge with truth and harshly points out the sins associated with their unobtainable expectation of the laws of God.

Beginning in verse 33, Jesus offers His harshest rebuke yet when He points out just how misguided their attack on His actions truly are. Jesus explains how a person's actions provide a picture for a person's inner heart. This even includes our speech. **Read Matthew 12:33-37.** Jesus ends up warning them and anyone else standing near about the final judgment that will come. And yes, it's true that every person, even Christians will be judged for our words and our actions. And this is why I haven't been able to stop thinking about Matthew 12:33.

What are my trees? Are they planted and being nurtured properly? Am I neglecting areas of my life and allowing those areas to be producers of bad fruit? Are there things in my life that grieve the Spirit of God?

If so, and there are. How do I make corrections when and where needed?

Galatians 5:16-26 (Fruits of the Spirit)