

True believers.

OT Reading. Jeremiah 6:14-30

NT Reading- **Matthew 21:19** And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once.

We are looking at what a true believer is. **Our subject today** Marks of genuine Christianity.

In our Old Testament reading we see description of the people of Judah who they thought they were safe, because of their outward actions, their many sacrifices of frankincense and sweet cane from faraway lands. This they did, but they rejected Gods ways they refused to be ruled by Him. They had an outward appearance of serving God , but in reality their hearts were far from Him.

Yet even with idolatry and sin, with all the hypocrisy, God was merciful and gave them many times to repent. *Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger forever. - Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God.*

Sadly they would not turn and were rejected. *Jeremiah 6:30 Rejected silver they are called, for the LORD has rejected them.*” They are pretending to be silver, they are deceived. Their hypocrisy is well known to all men. Your silver has become dross, your best wine mixed with water.

Pretenders were in the Old Testament. Pretenders were in the New Testament. *Matthew 5:13 “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.* We must ask ourselves is my Christianity attractive, Is it real. Has it made me a completely new Creation. Is my Christianity genuine.

Nearly all people will agree that genuine Christianity is what is needed today. But the problem is, they will classify almost anyone who goes to Church as a genuine believer. **So how do we know if a believer is genuine?** There is only one way to measure. **And that is by the Holy scriptures.** What does the Bible say? For this is the only reliable judge on the matter.

If we look at the parables spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ. We can clearly see how many of them clearly make a strong contrast between the true believer and the mere nominal disciple the professor but not the doer.

True believers.

Let's take a brief look at just a few of the parables.

Matthew 13:44-46 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. [45] Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: [46] Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

One man was not even seeking the treasure but found it, the other a buyer of pearls was looking for pearls. But their behaviour was the same. They sold everything and sought the treasure they had found.

These two parables to teach us, *that men really convinced of the importance of salvation, will give up everything to win Christ, and eternal life.*

One man was **fully persuaded** that what he had found in the field was of great value and at all costs he must have it. That what he had found was much more valuable than anything he had. The other had found a pearl of great beauty and value, he had never seen something as good as this before and was willing to sacrifice everything he had to get it.

Maybe others looked at them thinking they were foolish; others couldn't see what they saw. **Do you know the world can't see the value of salvation.** But when He opens our eyes to see no sacrifice is too much, we will be like these two men. We know that the treasure we have found is more than enough. **This is a picture describing the Christian who sees Christ.** The one who has been given Grace and Faith so freely who sees and who understands, one who is *thoroughly persuaded* that it is worthwhile.

He comes out from the world. He puts off the old man. He forsakes the vain companions of his past life. Like Matthew, he gives up everything, and follows the Lord. Like Paul, he *"counts all things loss"* for Christ's sake. He is fully persuaded, he is convinced that Christ is more than enough. He sees in Christ an endless "treasure." He sees in Christ a precious "pearl." To win Christ he will make any sacrifice. **This is true faith. This is the stamp of a genuine work of the Holy Ghost.**

But the church goer only, is not fully persuaded that its worthwhile to be different. They flinch to make a decision to give up all, they shrink from taking up their cross daily, they waver between two opinions, they won't come forth boldly and be counted as the Lords. They are not sure that "the treasure" before them is enough, they are not satisfied that "the pearl" is worth so great a price. They cannot yet make up their minds to "sell all," that they may win Christ.

Too often they perish and are lost forever. When a man will venture nothing for Christ's sake, we must draw the sorrowful conclusion that he has not got the grace of God.

True believers.

The chapter continues *Matthew 13:47-48* Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: [48] Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

Let the lesson of this parable be written upon your mind. This is of such eternal importance. There are few other areas where so many mistakes exist. This is speaking of the nature of the visible church. The congregation containing both good fish and bad fish. **converted and unconverted**, children of God and children of the world.

To tell all people in the church they are safe just because they say Lord Lord, just because they come to church. Just because they give offerings. No, that may please the hearer but will never save them. **Never be satisfied by outward membership of a church.** You may be in the net, but are you in Christ Jesus, have you been converted, when the ship goes to shore and the fish are sorted, **are we among the good fish that is the question.** A day is coming when the true character of everyman's religion will be exposed. The good and the bad will be separated eternally. Oh, listen to these plain words before it is too late.

Lets look at another-

Of the two sons,

Mat 21:28 But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. Yes, yes said the one son but he never went. The other son said no I won't, but later repented and went. Which of the two did the will of the father? So many say yes Lord yes but do nothing, while others demonstrate true repentance. True repentance leads to action and obedience. Of course, the true one was the one that went even although he said no at first.

Let me give you one more... **Of the wedding garment,** *Matthew 22:11* And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:

Here was this invited guest, who refused to put on what has been provided. They were to put on the wedding Garment which signifies Christ. *Romans 13:14* But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

He was willing to eat the good things set before him, but in his heart, there was no love either for the King or his well-beloved Son.

This man without the wedding garment is the type of those who, in these days, pretend to be Christians, but do not honour the Lord Jesus, nor his atoning sacrifice, nor his holy Word.

True believers.

They only come to church for what gain they can get, but in a moment the king will detect and recognize them as traitors.

The King address him as friend. You see he was pretending to be a friend. But He was not. Then swift judgement was given, bind Him hand and foot, take Him away cast Him into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. "Why did he not even then fall on his knees, and seek forgiveness for his daring crime? Alas! pride made him incapable of repentance; he would not yield even at the last moment.

We could go on and on with many other examples-

the ten virgins, the parable of the talents, of the ten minas, of the two builders one who built upon the ROCK and the other upon the SAND - all these parables bring out in striking difference between genuine and Fake Christians. They all show the uselessness and danger of any Christianity which is not genuine, thorough, and true.

There is hardly a Christian grace listed in the word of God that cannot be imitated but it's not real. Counterfeit not real and not legal. Go to the shop with fake money... they will not accept it. Those that deal in it are in danger of being arrested by the police. How much more when it comes to Eternal matters, Spiritual matters.

Is there false repentance? yes we read about this in the holy scripture. And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. But it was not of the heart, Saul just wanted to look good in front of the people. How many even today feel sorrow at their sin but never turn from it unto salvation.

There are also bible example's of **false faith**. In **Acts 8** we read of Simon of Samaria who had bewitched the people with his sorcery. But when He heard Philips preaching, He claimed to believe. He claimed that he had come to faith. But the Apostles say to him your heart is not right within you Repent of your wickedness. **There is even false holiness.** Joash, king of Judah, appeared to be very holy and good, so long as Jehoiada the priest lived. But as soon as he died the religion of Joash died at the same time (2 Chronicles 24:2) What about Judas the traitor, Judas what was one to the 12 he pretended, yet he was a thief, He even was named among those who were given power to cast out demons. As we read *Matthew 10:1 And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.*

True believers.

All this shows us the tremendous importance of true Christianity. Ever since the church began there were always hypocrites, even today they are still very present.

So many attend church regularly they have been baptised. They even have a bible. Yet the great truths preached from the pulpit have no place in their hearts at all. The word of God has no influence upon their lives at all. They don't even care about the teaching of Christ Jesus. Worse still they claim to be true Christians. But they are nothing like the Bible teaches we should be.

They have very zealous expressions of Worship. But ignore the inward work of the Holy Spirit, they do not separate from worldly influence and worldly practices, they tolerate sinfulness. They never share their faith with lost souls. Are these genuine? Do these please God? Can Christ be seen in their lives? Oh, how easy it is to see this is not genuine Christianity.

Now we turn to self-examination. Not a popular subject but a needful subject. **Here are a few tests to see if our Christianity is genuine.**

How we will rejoice when we see it is true. And if it is not true there is still time to turn away from false ways and turn toward truth.

When we look at the shining examples of those who were willing to die for their faith. We can only exclaim what genuine faith they had. What commitment they had. How strong they were.

If you want to know whether your religion is real, try it by "the place it occupies" in your inner man.

It's not enough to have a mental understanding, It's not enough to say amen to all the public prayer in the church. Outward behaviour is not enough. It's not enough you have strong feelings, and weep at some preaching and be full of Joy another. but to be dead to God and never being a doer of the truth we hear. If our Christianity is real, it must be in the heart. It must govern our whole lives. It must control our affections, it must direct our every will. It must affect our choices and decisions. It must be seated on the throne of our soul. If Jesus is lord and King to us, He must be enthroned on our hearts. when our Christianity is not everything to us we can doubt its genuineness.

True believers.

Another good test is what is our attitude towards sin. Do we love the world's sins and are we friends with the world. Do we value its wisdom, are we addicted or devoted to any worldly way. *James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

Of course, in some measure you must mix in the world, while you live on earth — but let it be evident that you rise above it. Don't be the slave of worldly practices! There is very little to be found at the night club, at the bar, at the gambling table. If you want to find something of true value something deep and lasting you must look higher. To a close walk, in fellowship with the Lord, to sitting at His feet and hearing the eternal words of life, to sweet and real fellowship in the light where He is in the light. **The scripture shows us, "it is life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent."**

Life Eternal... this life is absolute fullness of life, life real and genuine, a life active and vigorous, devoted to God, blessed. **Eternal** is this life without end forever and ever. To know Christ; to have Christ as our all. He is the Joy and reason for living, the world has nothing to offer, rather what the world offers seems empty and shallow to the truly saved. Besides what the world offers mostly ends in misery and sadness.

What is our attitude to just the little sins, do we excuse these because everybody commits them, little acts . . . - of dishonesty, - of selfishness, - of neglect, - of pride and self- - of petty deceits and half-untruths —

Who can tell how much harm is often done by these things, and to what far greater evils they often lead? Let us never judge if something is sinful in the light of all those around us, rather in the - in the light of God's Word, - in the light of the cross, and - in remembrance of the day of judgment." One who loves the Lord with all of their heart also loves to obey His commands, What God loves they love what God hates they hate. They are in agreement with the Lord, or in step with the Lord.

While there are many other good tests, the most common test is **what fruit** is born in our lives. Are we known by Christian fruit. Every tree is known and recognised by its Fruit. The fruit produced in us is repentance, faith, hope, love, humility, spirituality, kindness, self-denial, unselfishness, forgiving spirit, moderation, truthfulness, hospitality, and patience.

The degree in which these various graces, or fruits appear may vary in different believers. Yet the seeds of them will be found in all who are the

True believers.

children of God.

Lastly you can test yourself this Sunday. Is it a Joy to be in Church? Or would you rather be somewhere else. Do you just tolerate coming to church because it's the proper and correct thing to do? **What about your private devotional life.** Do you have any Joy to read your bible alone at home. When you pray alone at home is it precious to you.

Test yourself honestly. If you are a true one you won't hesitate to test yourself. If you find that you are lacking and fail. Thank the Lord you have found out before it is too late. *2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? (Unless you are disqualified and rejected as worthless and cast away.)*

TAKE my life, and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee: Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.