



September 7, 2025

Joshua Parrish

Matthew 7:15-23

Introduction

This week's message explores Jesus' critical warning about false prophets as we near the end of our journey through the Sermon on the Mount. Joshua Parrish challenges us to develop spiritual discernment in a world full of voices claiming to speak for God. The message emphasizes that recognizing false prophets requires careful, long-term observation of their "fruit" — not just their words, but their actions and the outcomes they produce. Through examining the connections to Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 22, we discover that the pattern of religious deception is ancient, and Jesus calls us to know and do God's will rather than simply claim His name.

Key Texts: Matthew 7:15-23; Jeremiah 23:5-6, 14-16, 21, 25-26; Ezekiel 22:25-29; Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:14-17

Icebreaker

Share about a time you almost fell for a scam (email, phone call, online, etc.). What made you suspicious, or what would have made you more cautious?

Discussion Questions

1. Joshua mentioned that "the worst kinds of lies are the ones that are mostly true." In your own experience, what makes partial truths so persuasive? How can we develop better discernment when information seems mostly accurate?
2. **Read Matthew 7:15 together.** Jesus warns about people who come "in sheep's clothing" but are "ferocious wolves." What qualities might make someone appear trustworthy and spiritual on the surface? Why is external appearance insufficient for evaluating spiritual authority?

3. **Read Jeremiah 23:14-16 together.** These false prophets claimed to speak for God but were actually speaking "visions from their own minds." What's the difference between genuinely seeking to understand and communicate God's will versus promoting our own ideas or agenda?
4. **Read Matthew 7:16-20 together.** Jesus says we'll know people "by their fruit." What does "good fruit" look like in someone's character and actions? How can we apply this principle to evaluating our own spiritual growth?
5. John Mark Comer said we're either "being intentionally formed by Jesus" or "unintentionally formed by someone or something else." What does it mean to be "intentionally formed by Jesus"? What practices or habits help someone stay grounded in His teachings?
6. Joshua's main point: "What you 'know' about God shapes what you do; What you do serves the god you truly serve." How can we tell the difference between head knowledge about God and heart knowledge that actually changes how we live? What helps knowledge move from our minds to our actions?
7. How can your Community Group help each other develop better spiritual discernment? What practices could help you stay grounded in Jesus' teachings rather than being swayed by every new voice or idea?

Key Takeaways

- False prophets have existed throughout history and continue today
- Recognizing false teachers requires observing their "fruit" over time
- What we consume (media, teaching, relationships) is always forming us
- True discipleship involves both knowing and doing God's will
- Our actions reveal which "god" we truly serve
- Developing spiritual discernment is crucial for following Jesus

Notes