



Although the whole human race is one species, the Lord cuts it in two so that there are two kinds of people. Speaking spiritually, they are so different it's as if they are two separate species. From our point of view, the point of division is not immediately obvious because it is possible for one type of person to act like the other. But eventually the truth will become clear because no one cannot keep up the act for ever. Eventually we all

have to confront the inescapable truth. When you do discover the inescapable truth about yourself, the gospel says there is hope.

Jesus talks about good trees and bad trees. (v43) The word bad means unpleasant, bitter, evil. We are not talking about healthy or unhealthy trees. The Lord says some trees produce fruit that is useful and pleasant to eat while others produce fruit that is bitter and bad to eat. Similarly, there are dangerous and troublesome people. They will make you unhappy and give you a hard time. Thankfully there are people who are an absolute joy. They are a treasure that energises you and makes you strong.

The human heart is your treasure chest. If it contains wicked evil stuff eventually that will come out. And it will also become clear if you have some really good things in there. People like to play a game where they refuse to let the things in their heart come out, so no one knows what they are really like. We can keep up the act until something triggers a response and out comes the treasure, good or bad. "You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time". There is no middle ground. The truth will out. "Out of the heart the mouth speaks." (v45b) The heart is the tree, the mouth is the fruit and where you are rooted makes the difference. If your whole life is condemnatory (v37) eventually it will come out of your mouth. But if you are giving and forgiving and are drawing on the mercy of God your Father this good will come out in your life.

Jesus talks about hypocrites (v42). In Greek a hypocrite is an actor. We love a performance. I grew up in a theatrical family and was expected to be an actor until I met Jesus. I ended up on a stage giving speeches. Am I acting? Is this a performance? We spend time preparing a script. I have prepared. But how do you know if I'm just an actor, a hypocrite? How do I know if all you cuddly Baptists are for real? Here in church we only have to play a part for an hour. Be warned, God knows what we are. We will never fool God. He sees the real life that we live. Jesus talks about people who say, "Lord, Lord" (v46) By repeating himself the actor overstates his case. It isn't immediately obvious who is who. People can say the right thing, play the part to a certain extent but in the end "they don't do what I say" (v46) And there's the proof of the pudding. We have to watch the progress, not in a curtain twitching, judging sort of way, but in a

sober assessment of facts, a reality check. We are standing for a doctrinal truth, for fundamental Christian beliefs. It is not the beliefs that we hold that matter, it is the beliefs that hold us that matter.

Actions speak louder than words. In the end if the heart is not right then basically you are the wrong kind of tree. What are you going to do about it? We must get before God as Jesus confronts us with reality. Clearly there are consequences for each kind of tree. What is your life? This is deep fundamental stuff. As George said last week, "The sage on the stage has become the guide by the side" But the problem is that the guide by the side, (i.e. the internet) does not allow you to know that person's life nor can he know you, whereas you can get to know the sage on the stage and he you. So there is the possibility for you to track their actions and work out if this person is a hypocrite or a real Christian. If you get baptised and involved in church life with the attitude of 'Here I am, scrutinise this', and are willing to live in community in an accountable way where over time in the general pattern of life, the truth becomes clearer and the work that needs to be done becomes more obvious. The local church gets to know where each other stands. Jesus said, "Do what I say". Does Jesus say we should be part of the local church? You can be a Christian on line at home (some have to be because of personal circumstances) but generally speaking Jesus wants you to be in a local church where you will be accountable to other people. Knowing and being known. You are being invited to build you house on the rock. When the storm comes it could not shake the house on the rock. Having the work of God in your life means nothing can shake it. All your unrepented sin, pride and arrogance will be dealt with by the rubbing of Christians together like stones on a beach that are all rounded and smooth. The local church is a tumble-dryer. But consider the security. Your security is in Christ and your part in his body. The alternative is to disregard everything Jesus is saying and keep putting on the performance. If you do, you are fooling no one but yourself and in the end the wind and the waves will come with complete destruction. (v49b)

You may think this is just hyperbolic preaching that you won't take too seriously or you may think that this is God speaking. If it is God, why don't you listen and do it. Listen to Jesus and build you house on him. If you realise that you are in fact a bad tree and you know it and God knows it you may ask, "Is there any hope for me?" Jesus raised the dead, made the blind to see, the lame to walk. He can change your heart. There are people here who will tell you he did it for them. If you are a good tree today the only truly good tree I know is Jesus himself, The Tree of Life! I am a native-born hypocrite, native-born bad tree. Just in case any of you think otherwise I'm telling you here and now in public. Jesus has done a transformatory work and in his miraculous, supernatural power he can give a person new life. You can be born again, a new species, bearing different fruit, to the glory of God, through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.