

## **Would Real Christian Teachers Please Stand Up Matthew 7:15-23**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and our Savior Jesus Christ.

“Would real Christians teachers please stand up.”

A few years ago, Missouri Synod youth, at the National Gathering in San Antonio were made aware of the subtlety of lies which sound like truth.

At a Lutheran youth gathering there was a skit one evening in which three common everyday scenes were acted out. The first scene was about a bad ethical choice that was made. The second scene was a youth planning meeting in which the youth were trying to get everyone involved. While the third scene was the organizational meeting for the prom, in which one girl was voted off the prom committee because all of the committee had to be popular. This one young lady was not popular because she had told the truth that some of the others had been drinking and this got them in trouble.

After each brief scene, a white robed figure came out and spoke about what lesson was to be learned. The first lesson to learn was that to be a Christian, people need to respect others. Everyone needs to set their own standards in life. And as Christians, even when someone makes or is planning to make a bad decisions, we must affirm them in their choice. The second lesson learned according to the white robed gentleman was that everyone must enjoy doing their part. Plan events that everybody will enjoy and in which everyone can have a part.

What nice sounding things this man is telling those gathered. He is robed in white, he is giving what appears to be sound advice. This must be God's representative! At least, that is what most everybody listening is thinking.

Finally, the third lesson is that unity is the most important issue. We must all stick together, even if it means sometimes not telling the truth. After the third lesson is taught by this white robed figure, the real Jesus comes out and exposes this person as Lucifer, it is Satan disguised as an angel of light.

Yes, there might have been some truth in the words which Lucifer was trying to teach, but the little bits of truth only masked deeper lies. Satan loves to play that game. Satan loves to be the wolf wrapped in sheep's clothing. Satan loves to play the game show that was popular years back, hiding the lie in what appears to be truth.

When someone makes a bad decision, we need to speak up, we need to point them to truth and to Christ – we do not affirm people in their choices when their choices are a clear violation of God's Word. We are to always tell the truth.

Would the real Christian teachers please stand up? It would be nice if we could simply say that, and only those who teach the **WHOLE** truth about Christ and God's Word would be able to stand up. Unfortunately, Satan is out there and he is a subtle craftsman of lies. In fact, Jesus calls him

the father of lies, the great deceiver.

Jesus warns you that you must beware of the wolves in sheep's clothing. You will know them by their fruit. You can test their fruit, their teachings with the Scriptures. You have been given a standard, a scale to test whether those who teach in Christ's name are teaching according to God's Word, or according to man's ideas.

Most often, one simple test will suffice. Does this teaching bring glory to mankind or to Christ? Does it give credit to man or Christ? God's Law – proclaimed in truth and purity always accuses – it will never lead us to confidence in ourselves. The main goal of God's Law is to get people to realize their helplessness in saving themselves and to ultimately point them to Christ.

The Gospel faithfully proclaimed will deliver Christ – it proclaims and delivers His work to purchase forgiveness and give life to sinners.

Even faith in not our own work. God says that faith is His gift – a gift from God, so that no man can boast. Jesus tells you that faith the size of a grain of mustard can move mountains. It moves the mountains of your sins off your back and onto His and you are saved. There is no such thing as not enough faith.

While it is indeed true that some people have stronger faith, there is never anyone who doesn't have enough faith. Faith is a gift of God, and He gives you all that you need. Sometimes we may think it is not as much as we would like, but is always as much as we need.

Do you see how Satan may attack? There are those who will point at you needed to get yourself free from sin – that only when you stop sinning are you truly saved. Or they may point at so-called works of faith – speaking in tongues, faith healing, and others – if you cannot do them, then you do not have enough faith.

Yes, there are some claiming to be Christian teacher, they are well-meaning, and may even believe that they are God's instruments, but they are pawns of Satan. The angel of darkness has appeared to them as an angel of light and deceived them.

False doctrine and false teachers usually come masked in enough truth to be believable. And, like the lesson taught to those Lutheran youth, the external appearance of false doctrine is often most pious and very easily believed.

However, all those who are false teachers, even those who think they are teaching the truth, will be eternally lost. Those who think they are teaching the truth will claim that they taught in Jesus' name on that last day, but you heard Jesus' word to them, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"

It is for this reason that you must come to know the Scriptures. You must all grow in your knowledge of Christian doctrine, for even the most subtle differences can lead to damning consequences if believed. And as you are led through study of Scriptures, as you read it, as you hear God's Word preached, you must trust solely in your Savior's merits given to you through

the hearing of that Word and through the sacraments.

False doctrine is never harmless! If it remains unrecognized, it can lead you away from the true Shepherd with everlasting disastrous results. Look at what will happen to the wolves, they will not enter the kingdom of heaven, they will hear the voice of the Shepherd speak, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"

The wolves in sheep's clothing felt that they were teaching and proclaiming Christ, they will say, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons, and perform many miracles?" And the very sad response they will hear, will be Christ saying that He never knew them.

I pray for those who feel they are doing right and think that they are proclaiming the truth of God's Word. They have been deceived and follow a lie. They are so busy trying to be loving to others, they have forgotten love of God above all things. They would rather make men happy than love the truth of God's Word. Love without truth holds damning consequences. While God is love, He also warns away from sin. Sin, is that word so little spoken of today by many Christian teachers. And so, many fall into sin, never knowing the danger.

False teachers will receive an eternal condemnation, since all false doctrine is finally rebellion against Christ. As you have heard before, the true disciples of Christ hear and follow only the master's voice, the voice of the Good Shepherd.

You gather together to hear God's Word speak to you. You come to hear it and through it, Christ's Spirit works in you. It is the Spirit who leads you believe truth. Sometimes the Word of God is not what you want to hear, it goes against what you want to hear – it calls you a sinner. But it also proclaims and delivers to you, Christ. Christ crucified delivers forgiveness to you in Word and meal – this is the Gospel of Christ, and this is the only truth with eternally gracious rewards.

Christ comes to you and forgives you for being enticed by the message of the wolves in sheep's clothing.

As you receive that wonderful gift of forgiveness, God's Holy Spirit fills you, and guards and protects you from further false doctrine. He gives you a greater hunger and thirst for the pure milk of His Word until the day you enter His eternal and great heavenly kingdom.

Until that day, you are being built up by Christ Himself. He gives to you His forgiveness, eternal life, salvation and the strengthening of your faith. Christ is the very rock, the very foundation upon which He builds up His whole church in Word and Sacrament. You are kept firm in the faith, to stand in all trial and temptation until Christ takes you to be with Him or until He returns again.

On that day, and in that place, you will not need to ask, "Would the real Christian teachers please stand up," you will know the Shepherd's voice. Amen.