

Take-Home · Session 8

The Tree and Its Fruit

What We Found

Our sealed guesses met Jesus' own answer: "You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16, 20). Feelings, credentials, and even wonders can counterfeit; character ripened over years is far harder to counterfeit and is the sign Jesus points to.

The fruit test is for recognition, not condemnation: whom to trust and what to flee, never a license to read hearts. "Judge not" stands earlier in the same sermon.

John 15 answers the cause: abide. The branch's whole job is to remain; apart from the vine, nothing. The Spirit is the sap (CCC 1108); abiding is concrete: his word, prayer, the sacraments, the Eucharist.

The Father prunes the fruitful branch to make it bear more: the image lets us receive trials as occasions for deeper fruitfulness rather than proof of abandonment.

Fruit takes time to ripen. Pastors observe that counterfeits tend to be fast and impressive; keep that observation beside Jesus' own criterion, the fruit itself.

Voices of the Church

St. Augustine · *Tractates on John 81, summary*

Christ did not say "without me you can do little." He said nothing. The humility that admits it is the same act as the abiding that receives everything.

St. Bonaventure · *The Mystical Vine, traditionally attributed, summary*

The vine was pruned, bound, and pierced, and its wine is his blood. Abiding is union with the crucified and risen Lord, above all in the Eucharist.

St. Teresa of Avila · *Life, ch. 11, summary*

Four ways to water a garden, from hauled buckets to rain the Lord sends himself: our labor is real, and it is never the water.

Live It This Week

This week's one thing. Start one small, sustainable abiding practice this week.

- Optional: Reread John 15:1-11 daily.
- Optional: Write a new answer to the Session 1 question and keep it in your Bible at Matthew 7:20.

Memory Verse

Matthew 7:20 · Thus you will know them by their fruits.

Before Next Session

Read Isaiah 11:1-3.

Scripture this session: Matthew 7:15-20; John 15:1-11; Psalm 1; Isaiah 5:1-7; Galatians 5:22-23 · Catechism: 755, 787, 1108, 2074