

## “Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing” Matthew 7:15-23 Trinity 8 2021

Grace and peace in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The common theme of our reading for today is false prophets. According to our reading of the Old Testament (Jeremiah 23:16-29) there were false prophets in the time of Jeremiah.

"Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD. They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you."

What are the characteristics of false prophets? They speak from a vision of their heart, not from the mouth of the Lord. What comes out of the mouth of the Lord? The Holy Scriptures, the inspired books written by true prophets and apostles by the power of the Holy Spirit.

What kind of words come from the mouths of false prophets? Whatever people want to hear. For the people who do not live according to the will of God, the false prophets say "You shall have peace ... No evil shall come upon you." But the Lord says, "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I do not I spoke, they prophesied. And if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people; and they had turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds. " The Word of God includes God's law, so the true prophet cannot say, " God loves you, no matter your lifestyle. " So says our reading of the Old Testament.

In our Gospel for today, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself says, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."

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There were false prophets in the time of Jesus Christ as well. There are false prophets today. There are many voices in the world who say this is the will of God, this is the secret of understanding the universe, this is the meaning of life.

Some of the false prophets are obvious. Astrologers say the stars guide your destiny, also mediums and sorcerers point to revelations beyond Scripture. There are many false religions that deny Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

But there are also false prophets dressed as sheep. They speak of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and use many quotations from the Bible. Remember the story of the temptation of Jesus, the devil used many quotes from the Bible to try to fool our Lord in the wilderness.

How our Lord did our Lord answer? With the truth of Scripture. The devil said, "It is written," But the Lord replied, "It is also written." Our Lord knew the Scriptures, we too must study and know the truth of the Bible as a defense against the snares of the devil.

There are no revelations of God apart from the Bible. The books of the prophets and apostles contain everything we need to know for our salvation. Visions of our hearts, thoughts of our mind, are not reliable.

Even if it seems one can do miracles, if his words are against the teaching of the Bible, he is a false prophet. Our Lord says, "By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, and figs from thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." Sometimes false prophets show their nature by their lifestyle, others not by an impure life but by words that does not conform to the truth of the Bible.

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Because the false prophets who use Bible verses to deceive many people, it is sometimes necessary for the church to make a confession of the truth of Scripture. In our church we have the Book of Concord, a confession of our beliefs and an explanation of the Scriptures. It is not more than the Bible, but contains the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasius Creed, Confession of Augsburg and more writings against the errors of the Roman Catholic church and sects that did not exist at the time of Jesus. We do not have a code to decipher the Bible, we have no new revelation, but we have a faithful exposition of the Scriptures.

We have in Scripture the gospel of Jesus Christ, the message of forgiveness and the promise of eternal life through the blood of Christ. The Holy Spirit is active in preaching the Word and administering the sacraments, not another means of grace. This is our belief, our creed, so we have the peace that passes all understanding. Amen.