

+ MAY THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH AND MEDITATION OF ALL OUR HEARTS BE NOW AND ALWAYS ACCEPTABLE IN THY SIGHT, O LORD OUR STRENGTH AND OUR REDEEMER. AMEN.

**TODAY'S TEXT:** "BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS, WHO COME TO YOU IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING, BUT UNDERNEATH ARE RAVENOUS WOLVES." Matthew 7:15.

INTRODUCTION: In today's Gospel (Matthew 7:15-21), JESUS, comes strongly in warning us to pay attention to false prophets and to guard ourselves against hypocrisy and self-deception.

#### THE WARNING AGAINST FALSE PROPHETS:

The word 'beware' means "pay attention to", or "guard yourself against." The same word is used at the beginning of Matthew 6, where it is said "Beware of practising your righteousness before men."

Jesus knew that it is so easy for hypocrisy to creep into our religion, so He told us to watch out for it, and in the same way, He knew that false prophets and teachers would come and try to steer us away from the true path, so He commands us to "beware" of them; be on guard against them. You have to be aware that there are false prophets in the world, that Satan will use them to lead you in the wrong direction.

I think this is hard for many of us, because we want to believe people; we want to believe that everyone is who they say they are, and that they have a good heart, and that they are teaching and doing good and godly things. But unfortunately, that is just not reality.

Just as it is a sad reality that we have to teach our children that there are people in this world who will appear to be nice, but who really want to hurt them – the same thing is true spiritually.

We might wish that everyone who holds up a Bible and said "Thus says the Lord" would really be a person sent from God, but we just cannot do that. The sad truth is, there are false prophets and teachers in this world who will not kill your body, but who would lead you astray spiritually and destroy your soul. You must, therefore, be on guard against them. We need to understand that it is our responsibility to exercise discernment.

#### THE DISGUISE OF FALSE RELIGION:

These false prophets and teachers exist in large numbers, and disguise themselves in "sheep's clothing" whereas underneath they are ravenous wolves. In other words, these people outwardly they look good and godly, whereas in reality they have disguised themselves and are evil in character.

And many false prophets will  
arise and lead many astray.

- Matt 24:11

In 2 Corinthians 11, Apostle Paul spoke of "false apostles, deceitful workers, distinguishing themselves as Apostles of Christ," he says these men do not come into our Churches in a creepy voice saying, "I am a messenger of Satan." Paul says, they will tell you, they are Apostles, Bible teachers and Spirit inspired. Beware, they are false. In 2 Cor.11:14, Paul says, "No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an Angel of Light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness."

Let us understand that, Satan is not going to appear to us with horns and a red cape! His messengers will be attractive, smartly dressed, with a nice smile and a great personality. They will have large followings, big Churches, teaching exciting things and being very popular. You may be tempted to follow, but Jesus is saying to you and me, BEWARE of them.

So, how can you identify them?

#### THE FRUIT OF FALSE RELIGION:

Jesus in Matthew 7:16 He says, "You will know them by their fruits."

He continues in verses 16-20 and says, *“Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits.”*

This is exactly what Jesus tells us about Spiritual discernment. You can tell false preachers and teachers by the fruit they bear.

False teachers are not faithful to the full counsel of the Word of God. They will depart from solid Orthodox and Biblical teaching. God’s Word alone is our ultimate authority and that we are saved by Grace alone, through Faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone. That is a solid framework for Biblical teaching.

As Christians, the Bible alone is our ultimate authority, but we need to be careful, because the devil can even twist Scripture for his own purpose. Just because someone quotes Scripture does not mean they are not false teachers. We need to make sure they are teaching within the framework of Orthodox biblical teaching which Christians have believed for the last 2000 years.

Galatians 5, talks about THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, this chapter actually gives that fruit as a TEST of whether or not the Holy Spirit dwells in us.

Paul in verse 19 says, *“the deeds of the flesh are evident: immorality, impurity, sensuality ... factions, drunkenness, carousing ... of which I forewarn you ... that those who practise such things will not inherit the kingdom of God,”*

Paul in verse 22 talks about the fruit of the Spirit, as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

CONCLUSION:

THE LITMUS TEST is: “You will know them by their fruits.

And the answer is: CHECK THE FRUIT !!!!!!!

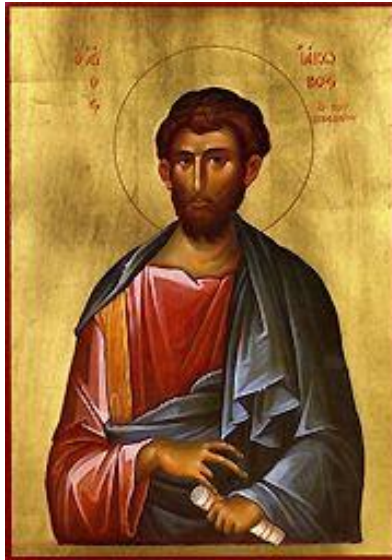
ARE YOU BEING A TRUE PROPHET or A FALSE PROPHET?

+ IN THE NAME OF GOD THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.



*Jesus teaching the disciples about trees and their fruit*

## ST JAMES THE APOSTLE



St Matthews Gospel Ch 4  
The Call of the first Disciples

<sup>18</sup> And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. <sup>19</sup> And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. <sup>20</sup> And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. <sup>21</sup> And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. <sup>22</sup> And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.



*Jesus calls James and John, the sons of Zebedee*