

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
 Eighth Sunday after Trinity
 August 10, 2025
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*Beware of false prophets which come to you
 In sheep's clothing
 But inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

This week, The Summer Survey of Essential Christian Doctrine
 Again takes us to Paul's Epistle to the Romans and
 For the second time this summer
 to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

Over the last three Sundays, the Epistles have come from Paul's
 epistle to the Romans,
 and Paul has been describing
 what it is like to abandon Satan and a life of sin,
 in exchange for binding ourselves to God
 and a life of righteousness and forgiveness.

In today's excerpt from His Sermon On the Mount,
 Jesus describes the new life of a Christian.

Today, both Paul and Jesus bring their discussion on the topic to an
 end.

Although we will visit the Sermon on the Mount
 One more time before the Survey of Essential Christian
 Doctrine concludes this Trinity Season,
 This is our last opportunity
 to be with the Epistle to the Romans.

Paul concludes it with a warm thought:
 In our new lives with God
 We become His Daughters and Sons
 With the full right to call Him "Abba":
 An affectionate Aramaic word for Father.

We become His sons and daughters by adoption;
 By our baptism.
And if we are the children of God
 We are also heirs,
 Heirs to the Kingdom of God.
 Heirs right beside another Child of God: Jesus.
 Can we even imagine all that it entails?

But lest our newfound euphoria goes to our heads
 St Matthew intercedes with the sobering words of Jesus
 From the Sermon on the Mount,
 That not all of our new life will be sweetness and light.

Jesus balances us out with the warning that there will be deceivers
Among us:
 People posing as prophets, pastors, priests and messengers
 From God.

Jesus is concerned and has a warning for us:
 Those wolves in sheep's clothing are clever deceivers
 Sometimes even reciting scripture,
 Spouting doctrine that sounds a though it could or should
 Be right.

St Paul famously wrote that we will endure unsound doctrine
 After our own lusts,
 When false prophets tickle our ears
 With the words we would like to hear;
 But which are false and deceptive.

Jesus knows us well
 Knows that we are vulnerable,
 Gullible,
 And occasionally ignorant.

You know, our “enlightened” society has developed
 A dangerous proclivity:
 We are dazzled by celebrity.
 By people with the appearance of fame,
 Wealth,
 Style,
 Success.

And we become followers of those that we perceive others admire.
 We find celebrity among the entertainment industry
 Actors and musicians
 Among athletes and politicians.

We are dazzled and beguiled by them
 By beauty
 A handsome face
 Or an attractive figure.

We are like the mouse
 Which encounters the snake
 And watches it, mesmerized as it bobs its head
 Back and forth
 Back and forth
 Edging ever closer and closer
 Until . . . SNAP!
 The mouse becomes a tasty lunch for the snake.

Why do we suspend our keen judgment and become dull witted
 At the feet of celebrity?

Perhaps He who made the mouse and He who made us
 Knows of our limitations
 Knows we need a way to identify
 The frauds,
 Knows we need a way to tell the true from the false
 To recognize the imposters.

And so, near the end of the Sermon on the Mount
Jesus gave us guidance
A way to spot the frauds
A way to spot the snake
Before we become its lunch.

He give us this practical advice:
“Ye shall know them by their fruits”.

To be sure that we can comprehend,
Jesus gives us the metaphor of the fruit tree.
A good tree can only produce good fruit
A corrupt tree can only produce evil fruit.
So look to the fruit of the tree to know its truth.

Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.
Ignore all the glitter and glamour of celebrity,
The artificial trappings of Hollywood
The handsome face
The deep English accented voice
The transitory allure of the makeup artist
The clever electronic embellishments, the AI.

Instead, look to the fruit of their works.
When the microphones and the teleprompters are turned off
When the big screens grow dark,
When no one is looking;
What are the fruits of his or her works?
Examine the results of the work of the new prophet.

Are those whom he motivates, His followers,
Leading lives reflecting
The light of Christ?
Lives of righteousness, adherence to God’s commandments?
Lives seeking to imitate the life of Christ?

And what of the new prophet
Is that life consistent with a life lived in the will of God?
Is the fruit of that life everything Jesus commanded?

All our lives we are tested
By our deeds
That fulfill
The will of God.

Not everyone who saith unto Jesus, "Lord, Lord"
Actually belong to Him.
It is only those who bring forth
The fruits of the true spirit in their lives
Who can lay claim to be the children of God.

False prophets
Will seek to deceive
Not only by a show of orthodoxy
But also by "wonderful works"
And unless their faith has produced
In themselves and in others
An inward change of life
Consistent with God's will
They can be a menace to true religion.

To our Lord's mind
There was no more dangerous enemy
Than the hypocrite
That wolf in sheep's clothing.

So Sons and Daughters of God
Beware of false prophets.

Judge those who would proclaim God
Not by their outer appearance
Not by a sonorous voice
Not by the glitz and glitter
The trappings of success.
All that can be illusion and deception
Judge them by the fruits of their works.