**Beware of False Teachers**

Based on [Matthew 7:15-23](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt7.15-23)

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Jesus teaches in this gospel that ***every disciple who follows him is charged with the responsibility to watch out for false teachers.***

Every worldly school and trade has a means of accreditation, a guild or association that certifies people who are qualified to work in their profession. Those who cannot teach or practice according to the standards and qualifications of the association will not receive their blessing.

So it is with prophets, who in the church today are the equivalent of ministers--teachers--who are called to teach Scripture, the whole counsel of Scripture, and nothing but the Scripture.

This is the central reason why we have voluntarily submitted ourselves to a Synod, “**the Lutheran Church--Canada**”. They are to give accreditation, as it were, in order to confirm churches and pastors in the sound doctrine of the scriptures, and to red flag those churches and ministers who teach or act falsely.

We freely participate in a synod in order to certify pastors and congregations, and aid us in keeping Christ’s command to beware of false prophets. However, where God sows wheat, the devil sows weeds. Where the government prints money, criminals print counterfeits; and no human institution, per se, is infallible when it comes to discerning truth from error. Christ sends his disciples out as sheep in the midst of wolves.

And, it is my distasteful duty today to report that our *humanly arranged synod* has failed Christ’s *divinely established church*, in its duty. It has failed publically, scandalously, and without comment let alone without repentance.

Brothers and sisters, you may have your own ideas in this regard, but I should be specific. I do not spread gossip in a corner; what I am saying is public knowledge. **Several weeks ago, the Alberta Securities Commission publically accused five men, pastors, of breaking the law in handling other people’s money.** Their guilt has yet to be determined at a hearing in August, but in the meantime both the official electronic news publications of our synod and of our district have released new issues without so much as mentioning the fact. Our own Lethbridge Herald had an article about it, but not our Synod’s news.

Now perhaps these men aren’t guilty, that remains to be decided by lawfully appointed authorities and we don’t have all the facts yet. But they have been publicly accused of misconduct by the province and are still serving congregations as pastors, even this morning as I preach to you. Perhaps they are not guilty, and their preaching is true, b**ut my point is this: The very fact that our synod and district have neglected to speak to us on this very public and very scandalous matter *proves* that they are not doing their job.**

There may be false prophets in our midsts, and we are not to bury our heads in the sand. We are to judge them by their fruits. Apparently, the synod says “**leave that to us internally and without letting you know what’s being done**...speak no evil hear no evil.” As far as we know, they haven’t been put on any sort of cautionary probation, and there is no “Official Statement to the church” indicating what’s being done. At the very least, the synod is presuming that judging the fruits of these men is none of your concern. But Jesus, today says it most certainly is.

God has not failed us in this regard, only men. And as the apostasy from within our synod may worse, it only serves to remind us of our own personal responsibility to judge the doctrine and the life of those who would presume to teach us the Word of God. **If the institutions we put in place through Christian Freedom fail us, we are still accountable for upholding Jesus’ Words.** Our Lord says “beware of false prophets” and he’s not speaking to a group of synodical officials, District Presidents or board of Directors. **He’s speaking to his disciples then, even as you are his disciples today.** And on the day of Judgment, when you will stand before the Lord to give an account of your deeds, and he asks you why you let false prophets, shepherds and fierce wolves into your midst to teach you and mislead you… “***I trusted my synod***, **Lord**” will not be an acceptable answer.

Only God is to be trusted absolutely; only his word is absolute truth. Our synod rules according to human arrangement, not divine command, and Scripture says that you are not to put your trust in human authorities. Your Synod’s stamp of approval has no power to justify, and no Board of Directors will be allowed to vouch for you in the judgment, any more than the Pope or the Saints could ever vouch for those within Rome, or any more than I, your Pastor, can vouch for you. Only Christ is your mediator and he says, “Beware of false prophets.”

An illustration: When you go to a doctor, and he applies some patently risky and irresponsible method in treating your illness. Or he’s negligent and doesn’t give you the proper care or disclose to you the risks of his prescribed treatment, and you lose life or limb because of him…what good is it to say, “**He was licensed by the medical association?**” It only serves to discredit the association, not to absolve the doctor, but more to the point—his having had worldly accredidation can in no way atone for your illness. The undiagnosed cancer in your limbs will not change its course because your doctor has a human license to practice medicine. If he makes a mistake, you die, which is why you still have a responsibility to look after your health rather than blindly trust your doctor.

A central idea of the Reformation sparked 500 years ago was this: Jesus tells us to beware of false prophets. The Roman Pope and his Magesterium have proven false. It doesn’t matter if they were certified by men for their position, God certifies no one to contradict his word. And they have done so as is evident in their fruits as we have identified them and to which they freely admit. Therefore, we may honor and respect them insofar as they are men and pastors when they bring us the holy teachings of Christ. But when Popes and Councils invent new measures that teach human traditions as though they are God’s Word, and when they assume discretion to contradict the Christ of the Scriptures, and when they cover up abuses and treat us like Christ’s teachings belongs more to them than to us, we cannot and must not follow them. When it comes to sound doctrine, we must follow God not men.

All this to say, Jesus warned you, and told you from the beginning to beware of false prophets by judging them according to their fruits. Their fruits are what their lips and limbs produce. Produce. True Prophets and Ministers sent by Christ produce true doctrine and practice accordingly. False Prophets and Wolves produce false doctrine and practice accordingly.

Now, someone might say, “The Reformation was all about separating faith from works, so that we are justified by what we believe not what we do. How can you teach that a prophet is justified by what he says and does? Maybe a minister gets a few things wrong, but he’s a sinner just like everyone else, and is justified by faith in the heart however imperfect and fallible he is in producing the fruits of that faith.

The Lord replies, **“Yes, true ministers are still able to sin, even publically in weakness, as all true disciples and saints still have their sinful flesh to contend with in this life. Paul rebuked Peter for sinning and showing partiality; Moses struck a rock twice and lost his invitation to the promised land, David sinned with Bathsheeba, etc. But true sheep of the Shepherd, including ministers, when confronted with their sin, repent of their sin.** If they have taught falsely, they repent and pledge to do better; if they are accused and convicted of sin, they repent and cooperate with the Holy Spirit. False ministers, excuse their sin, ignore, minimize or even scoff at rebuke and refuse to do better. **They pretend their motives and intentions are unassailable, but when they are confronted treat the Holy Inerrant Bible like a waxed nose that cannot convict them.** All are justified freely by faith; but ministers prove that they are called and sent by God by their works. And should St. Paul, or Pope Francis, or even an angel from heaven preach to you a Word that contradicts the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, let him be accursed.”

Again, this is your responsibility, individually to beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits.

And you will recognize Christ by his fruits. **Take eat, this is my body. Drink of it all of you this is my blood for the forgiveness of your sins. Fresh produce and fruit from the tree of life upon which hung our sin and the sin of the whole world.** The body and blood which rose again from the dead, the firstfruits of those who believe. **Is not the bread we break a participation in the true body of Christ, Is not the cup we drink a participation in the true blood of Christ?** If you have died, with Christ, have you not also been raised with him to new life?

So then, put on the new person you are in Christ. **Don’t tolerate falsehood or practice hypocrisy. Let your yes be yes and your no be no, and practice what Christ preaches.** Love your enemies; be kind to them, but do not trust them. Obey earthly rulers, do for them all you can without sin, but do not worship them.

Lust after the world and there will be no end to your suffering in this life or the next. **But live simply in the light of the word of God and angels will attend you, and devils will flee from you.** Be of one mind with your brothers and your neighbors and live in peace as much as within your power. Fear God more then men; and fear doing evil more than suffering it. **Commend everything to God through the Lord Jesus Christ, and lean not on the understanding of men which passes away, but on the Word of the lord that endures forever.**