

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

Daily Devotions

By Carl M. Zorn*

for the

Nineteenth Sunday After Trinity

-FRIDAY-

Beware of false prophets! – Matthew 7:15a

Of the salvation which is in Christ we know nothing, nothing at all, except what God's Word tells us. And this salvation does not become our own except through His Word. Therefore, His Word is the only means through which God reveals, and also gives, salvation to us. It is the only light in the darkness of death through which we must pass, the only remedy for the ravages of death. How highly we should prize this Word! How greatly concerned we should be about having this Word preached to us and taught to us in its truth and purity. Therefore our Savior said: *"Beware of false prophets!"* These false prophets are not those preachers who openly and blatantly proclaim a Christless religion, a purely heathen religion. On the contrary, these *"false prophets ...come to you in sheep's clothing"* (v. 15b). They **pretend** to be **Christian** preachers who are completely faithful to God's Word, but they are like *"many [who] corrupt the Word of God"* (II Corinthians 2:17a), teaching differently and practicing differently than how God, in His Word, wants them to teach and to practice. The Apostle Paul, in I Timothy 6, pointedly described such false prophets and instructed us on how to deal with them when He said: *"If any man teach otherwise [differently] and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to Godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing; ...from such withdraw thyself"* (vv. 3, 4a, 5b). This description and instruction from the apostle is in total agreement with the description and instruction from Jesus, when He said to us: *"Beware to false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits"* (Matthew 7:15-16a). *"Their fruits"* are what they teach [maybe only one teaching different from God's Word] and what they practice [maybe only one practice different from God's Word], but that one teaching and that one practice are like *"a canker [like gangrene] to precious souls, capable of overthrow[ing] the faith of some"* (II Timothy 2:17). Let us continue to *"beware of false prophets"* and continue to follow the every-timely counsel of the Apostle John: *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try [test] the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world"* (I John 4:1). Oh, our dear Savior not only warns us, *"Beware of false prophets,"* but He also encourages and comforts us, as our *"Immanuel"* (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23), who, as God, came down from heaven to be *"wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed"* (Isaiah 53:5) by God's total forgiveness, because of Christ, for the sins of the whole world, that forgiveness which we believers enjoy for ourselves *"through faith"* (Ephesians 2:8) in our Savior, the Savior of *"the truth"* (John 14:6), whose Word is *"truth"* (John 17:17b), ever showing us *"the truth"* (I Timothy 2:4) of our salvation in Him (Acts 4:12).

PRAYER – Oh, my precious Savior and my faithful Shepherd, help me to continue to hear the voice of Thy Word and to follow Thy Word wherever it leads me in this world, knowing that it will never mislead or deceive me. Grant my petition for Thy name's sake. Amen.

Scripture Reading for Friday: Revelation 3:19-22

Theme this week: Cross and Comfort

* Adapted and revised from original publication