

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

(Matthew 7: 15-21)

(*Poem* Vol. 2, pp. 143,725; *Gospel* Vol. 3, pp. 97-8, Vol. 4, p. 316)

(The Sermon of the Mount continues.)

It is the same place and the same time. The crowd is larger. In a corner, near a path, there is a Roman, who seems anxious to hear but does not want to upset the crowd. I recognise him from his short tunic and the different style of his mantle. Stephen and Hermas are still there.

Jesus walks slowly to His place and resumes speaking. [...]

'Beware of false prophets and erring doctors. They come to you clad as lambs, and they are rapacious wolves; they come clad with holiness and they deride God; they say they love the truth and they feed on falsehood. Study them before following them.

Man has a tongue and speaks with it, he has eyes and sees with them, he has hands and makes signs with them. But he has something else which is a more truthful witness of his real being :his deeds! And what are two hands joined in prayer, if a man is a thief and fornicator? And what are two eyes, which pretending to be inspired, roll in all directions, if after the farce, they greedily stare at a woman or an enemy, out of lust or for murder? And what is a tongue expert in whistling a false song of praise and in seducing by means of honeyed words, if behind your back it calumniates you and is capable of swearing falsely if only it could pass you off as a mean fellow? What is a tongue that says long hypocritical prayers and is then quick in killing the reputation of a neighbour or seducing his good faith? It is disgusting! And disgusting are untruthful hands and eyes. But the deeds of men, the true deeds, that is, his behaviour at home, in business, towards his neighbour and servants, are the things that testify: "This man is a servant of the Lord". Because holy deeds are the fruit of true religion.

A good tree does not bear bad fruit and a bad tree does not bear good fruit. Will these thorny bushes ever be able to give you tasty grapes? And those even more stinging thistles, will they ever be able to mature sweet figs for you? No, they will not. In actual fact you will be able to pick only a few sour blackberries from the former and uneatable fruits will come from the latter, which although flowers, are still thorny.

The man who is not just will be able to command respect by his appearance, and only by it. Also the downy thistle looks like a tuft of thin silvery threads adorned with diamonds by the dew. But if inadvertently you touch it, you find out that it is not a tuft, but a bundle of thorns, painful to man, harmful to sheep, so that shepherds uproot them from their pastures and bum them on the fire they light at night so that not even the seed may be spread. A just and provident step. I do not say to you: "Kill the false prophets and hypocritical believers". Nay, I say to you: "Leave the task to God". But I say to you: "Be careful, keep away from them that you may not be poisoned by their juices".

(Jesus says:) 'Every tree bears its fruit. You bear yours, but your fruit is not good. If you give a good tree to have it planted in the orchard, it will give good fruit; but if you give a bad tree, the fruit it will yield will be bad and everybody will say: "This is not a good tree". Because a tree is known by its fruit. And how can you think that you are able to speak well, since you are bad? Because a mouth speaks of what fills its heart. Because it is out of the superabundance of what is within us, that we act and speak. A good man takes good things out of his good treasure; a wicked man takes wicked things out of his evil one and he speaks and behaves according to what is within him.'