

False Prophets Twelfth Week in Ordinary Time Wednesday, June 28, 2017 8:15 AM
Gn 15:1-12, 17-18; **Mt 7:15-20** St. Irenaeus, bishop and martyr (Jesus is saying it is the responsibility of every person to discern.)

“By their fruits you will know them.”

As I’ve mentioned several times, **Jesus was a wisdom teacher.** That’s the figure from the Old Testament that fits him best. If you want to show continuity between what Jesus does and what happened in ancient times, that’s the best way to find continuity, that Jesus is a wisdom teacher. He is called a rabbi, but he isn’t a typical rabbi at all; he does not do what rabbis do.

Here he is putting a great deal of responsibility on his listeners. He is saying it is the responsibility of every person to discern. He said there’s going to be **false prophets.** What is a false prophet? A false prophet is someone who speaks for God, but not really for God, who claims to speak for God, but who is really not godly. There may be some outward appearance of goodness, reason, holiness, but underneath there is nothing there. **There’s ego, egoism, self-love, self-will, and therefore corruption.**

Now this is true today as much as it was true at the time of Christ. There are many people who claim to speak the word of God. They are in the airwaves. Their message is propagated on television, on the Internet, in all kinds of books. It is curious that St. Paul refers to the devil, the father of lies, as prince of the air. That’s because the air is not discerning; anything goes through it. **Every kind of rumor and lie and deception goes through the air without impedance. It’s up to us to impede falsity, false teaching, wrongness of thought and idea.**

And **that role Jesus puts** not in the rabbinate, not in the priesthood, not in any authority, but **in the very hearts and minds of his listeners, and starting of course with his disciples.** They have to lead the way. **They have to teach others how to do this.** And **the key is to look at**

the fruits of a person's life. What kind of life is this person really living? That will tell the story. "By their fruits you shall know them."

Now when we look at people who are claiming to be representing God, we have to look at, well, what kind of life are they living? **Are they really serving God or are they serving themselves?** There is in our world today, in our country in particular, a sort of Christianity that is all about success. **"If you believe, then you will succeed" is the basic teaching. That is clearly false teaching.** And those who promote it, however attractive they may seem to you or to someone else, are false prophets. That is not the gospel of Jesus Christ. **There is no gospel of prosperity in the teachings of Jesus Christ.** And the gospel of prosperity is a perfect example of false prophecy. "So by their fruits you will know them."