



In this Sunday's readings, brothers and sisters, we are going to find something interesting. The book of Sirach some parts of the wisdom literature are highly doctrinal and speculative; other parts consist of commonsense observations on human behavior and the moral imperative. Today's reading is of the latter kind. It spells out some of the dangers that threaten human integrity. The inner worth of human beings is to be assessed from their words and deeds, just as the fruit discloses the cultivation of a tree. This is the same metaphor as occurs in today's gospel reading from the sermon on the mount.

This reading is a continuation of Luke's sermon on the plain. since only the aphorism about the log and the speck and the parabolic saying about the tree and its fruits appear also in Matthew's sermon on the mount, we may conclude that only these two items already occurred in the great sermon of Q. Luke has prefaced the little parable with the aphorism of the blind leading the blind and the saying about the disciple no being above the teacher, which have parallels elsewhere in Matthew.

we hear Jesus speaking in Galilee as well as a Jewish sage named Sirach writing in Jerusalem more than a century earlier. The two of them touch upon a single truth: The words that come out of us make known the hidden thoughts within us. Speech reveals the secrets of the heart.

Sirach teaches that speaking is "the test of men" and their character. One who is upright will utter words that are truthful and encouraging to others. But one whose heart is cluttered with "refuse" will be exposed, since the "fruit" of his mouth speaks volumes about the "tree" that produces it. Sirach also compares the testing of our words to clay fired in a kiln—if properly prepared, a useful vessel emerges; but if the clay is not fully dried, it will break apart in the extreme heat.

In a similar way, Jesus insists that a person speaks "out of the abundance of the heart." He too compares our speech, whether good or bad, to what grows on a tree: "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit."

Both readings urge us to make wholesome speech a habit. After all, much about who we are is brought to light through what we say. But there's an additional step: The Lord is asking us to look inward, to examine our hearts and fill them with the "good treasure" that God desires.

Why do purity of heart and speech matter so much? Because, as Jesus declares elsewhere: "by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:37). They matter because they help to decide our final judgment, and this is where the Second Reading comes in. Paul reminds us that God will destroy death forever, and if we are to share in this victory and live forever with the Lord, then we must take all steps necessary to give our hearts and lips to what is good.

Reflect today on your mission to become a fully trained soldier of Christ. God wants to use you, to live within you and to act through you. He wants you to be like Him in every way—from purity of heart. This is only possible when you recognize the blindness you struggle with, turn your eyes toward Him, and allow Him to become one with you. Begin by turning to Him as He dwells within you. Seek Him, pursue Him, and love Him. If you keep your eyes on Him, He will carefully take care of the rest, guiding you toward a fully trained and fruitful life.

Fr. Victor Mendez Cano