

TFTD 23.16 Saturday March 11

Matt 12.22-50

Watch your language!



Jesus said, Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother. Matthew 12.50

Watch your language (vv.30-37)! Jesus' opponents are of course quite right: words matter, consistency matters, integrity matters. If you're a teacher, you have to be particularly careful that the way you live matches up to what you say (see James 3.1). But it works the other way, too: what comes out of your mouth can be a very revealing indicator of what's going on inside. Most dangerous of all is the empty word, the worthless word (v.36). Sometimes we use words just to fill the void, to cover the emptiness — or to muzzle those who are speaking the truth.

The sign of Jonah (vv.38-42). How much proof do you need? You've heard Jesus' words, you've seen him in action — you want a sign as well? This question takes us back to the Mount of Temptation (4.1-11), to Satan's insidious suggestions about doing something really impressive to make people listen. Maybe Satan was right — maybe that is what people need to convince them?

The quest for "signs" runs through all the Gospels. We need to be alert, to look for the signs of God's Kingdom: but we're not going to be given a mathematical proof. The early church saw Jonah's three days in the belly of the fish as a type of Jesus' resurrection. Ultimately, that's the only sign we're going to get, the sign of the Servant who gives himself for his people, the sign of the cross and the empty tomb.

The empty house (vv.43-45) is a terrifying tale, and a reminder that repentance and cleansing isn't enough. It takes more than aversion therapy to conquer the addictive power of sin: we need the indwelling power of God's Holy Spirit. Even Jesus' family are not exempt from his searching gaze (vv.46-50) — they don't have any monopoly over him. Jesus' true family ties are with those who "do the will of my Father in heaven." Choices matter: are you with me or against me? (v.30)

Lord, teach us to beware of the power of the tongue.
Keep us from the deceptive word, the hurtful word,
the worthless word. May our speech be always with grace,
seasoned with salt, and always reflect your truth:

through Jesus Christ your living Word. AMEN