

Thought for the Day 20th April - John Reed

Read James 3:13-18

Have you heard the one about the dodgy statue salesman? Perhaps not, it's a bit before our time. But it's worth revisiting.

It harks back to the days of the Roman Empire. Marble statues were all the rage, but good quality marble could sometimes be hard to come by. Often a sculptor would make do by using a cheap piece of marble with faults and cracks in it, and then seek to hide the cracks in the statue by filling them with melted beeswax. A buyer would pay top denarius for the apparently flawless sculpture, and place it proudly on display in his atrium. A few weeks later the beeswax would dry out, crumble away, and leave the original cracks exposed; leaving the angry purchaser doing his best to gain compensation.

This trickery became so prevalent that reputable sculptors began to guarantee their works as *sine cera* - which means, in Latin, *without wax*. From this we get our English word *sincere*, which means *genuine, without hypocrisy, or true*.

Now I doubt many of us make a living out of carving marble. But we are all in the business of building something: a career; a reputation; relationships. Just as a Roman sculptor didn't want his reputation damaged by beeswax, so we ought to be careful not to use beeswax in our dealings with one another, or with God. As we speak, we want to be able to say, as Job did, "*My words come from an upright heart; my lips sincerely speak what I know*" (Job 33:3). As we develop relationships, we ought to heed the words of the apostle Paul: "*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good*" (Romans 12:9). And as we approach God through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, "*let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience*" (Hebrews 10:22).

In other words, let us be characterized by godly sincerity in all we think and say and do. This is true wisdom, as James says: "*the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere*" (James 3:17).