

Thought for the Day 5th June - John Reed

Read Matthew 7:15-20

A little while ago – before the COVID-19 pandemic changed our lives – I was down at Figtree Grove shopping centre. I had just parked my car, and was heading towards the shops, when a car pulled up next to me. The driver stuck his head out of the window and, in an Italian accent, asked me for directions to Sydney airport. I thought it very odd that anyone would be in the shopping centre at Figtree looking for directions to the airport in Sydney, but I humoured him and gave him directions. He thanked me and went to drive off, but then stopped and backed up, and began to ask me if I wanted a leather jacket! He was so grateful, apparently, for my help (in telling him to turn out onto the highway and follow the signs!) that he wanted to reward me. Apparently, he was a director of marketing for a big Italian fashion house, had just been at a big fashion show (in Wollongong!) and was headed home with some leftover stock which he was keen not to have to carry with him as it would draw ridiculous taxes at customs. So he was looking to offload it cheap. He was offering me one free, and then several others at cost price.

Now, if the initial approach itself hadn't been strange enough, this offer of cheap designer leather jackets from a famous Italian fashion house was just bizarre. Struggling to keep a straight face, I told the man it was very kind of him to offer me a "free" jacket, but I really didn't feel comfortable taking a reward for offering simple directions. And as for the other "cheap" jackets, I really didn't want to give him any money, so perhaps he'd be better trying to find someone else to offer his "charity" to. Eventually, he left me alone.

I went home and told the story to Janine, and thought no further about it. Until today, when I read this story in the paper about a man claiming to work for an Italian fashion house who has been caught and charged for taking hundreds of dollars for worthless fake jackets off strangers he met in carparks!¹

I would say "there but for the grace of God go I." But I never came close to buying his story - or giving him money. Sadly, however, others did.

The world is full of people selling fakes. Fake Italian leather jackets. Fake Rolex watches. Fake Nike shoes.

But it's not just fake objects people sell. It's fake truth. We've heard a lot of talk about "fake news" lately. And if you're on Facebook or Twitter or any of the other social media platforms, you've probably come across it pretty much daily, as I do.

The same thing happens with spiritual truth. There are plenty of people out there offering to tell us the "truth." But we must be wary. Sometimes it's not the truth at all. Jesus here warns us to beware of false prophets. He is echoing a message that the Old Testament prophets often preached (see, for example, Ezekiel 13:9; Jeremiah 23:16) – a warning that the apostles would later repeat often to the fledgling church (see, for example, Acts 20:28-30; 2 Timothy 4:3-4; 2 Peter 2:1-2; 1 John 4:1-3). Still today, we must be careful who we listen to, and what messages we believe.

¹ <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/man-charged-after-allegedly-selling-fake-leather-jackets-for-hundreds-of-dollars-20200604-p54zma.html>