

22. January 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN
“The works of Jesus bear witness to Him”

Jn 5:31-47

If I bear witness to myself, my testimony is not true; there is another who bears witness to me, and I know that the testimony which he bears to me is true. You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Not that the testimony which I receive is from man; but I say this that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the testimony which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father has granted me to accomplish, these very works which I am doing, bear me witness that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness to me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen; and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe him whom he has sent. You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men. But I know that you have not the love of God within you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; it is Moses who accuses you, on whom you set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?”

Jesus, the Son of God, does not take testimony about Himself from a man, not even from John the Baptist, although he, enlightened by God, spoke the truth about the Son of God. Instead, Jesus appeals to the works that He does at the behest of His Father. These are the ones that bear witness to Him and lead people to the knowledge of the truth, as long as they do not close themselves off. The works are His valid testimony!

In the third chapter of John's Gospel we had seen how the Pharisee Nicodemus came to the right conclusion when he saw the works of Jesus. He came to Him by night and

said: *"Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him"* (Jn 3:2).

It is therefore the Father Himself who bears witness to His Son. As St Matthew's Gospel tells us, after the baptism of Jesus, the voice of the Father was heard from heaven: *"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased"* (Mt 3:17).

Jesus emphasises that no one can come to a true knowledge of God alone. If the Jews believe that they have eternal life in the Scriptures, then they should come to Him through the testimony of the Scriptures, which lead to the One from whom eternal life can be received. Unfortunately, this has not happened.

Jesus points out the reason why access to Him remained closed to His interlocutors: *"I know that you have not the love of God within you."*

Love of God would be the key that would open their eyes to see the presence of the Father in the works of the Son. Love for God would have moved their hearts to gratitude for the revelation of God in His Son, for true love enables them to see. Then they would have listened to His words and recognised that He had "the words of eternal life", as the Apostle Peter would later say (Jn 6:68). But those Jews did not come to Him, and therefore did not come to the Father in whose name Jesus came into the world.

We can see how difficult a situation this was for the Lord, because when a heart is closed to love (as was the case with the Jews He was addressing in this passage), it is practically inaccessible. All attempts to convince them with words and even the most obvious signs and miracles could not touch them. The result is usually rejection.

Sadly, this is still the case today. Therefore, if the Son of God is not recognised but rejected by men, it may happen that another comes in His own name, without being sent by God, and he will be recognised. With these words Jesus could be referring to a false Messiah.

In the worst case, this would be the Antichrist who will appear at the end of time and seduce people. This would include the Jews of today, since most of them have not yet recognised the true Messiah.

Jesus realises that the Jews He is addressing are not ready to believe. They seek each other's glory and are not concerned about the glory of God. Such behaviour prevents them from recognising the truth the Lord is bringing them because their thoughts and desires are focused on themselves.

Jesus makes it clear to them that it is not He who will accuse them before God, but Moses, because Moses had written about Him. If they had listened to Moses, they would have recognised Jesus.

We come to the same conclusion here as in the parable of the poor Lazarus and the rich man who had no pity on him. When the latter was in Hades, suffering terrible tortures, he asked Abraham to send Lazarus, who was lying in his bosom, to warn his brothers, lest they also come to that place of torment. But Abraham replied: *"If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead"* (Lk 16:19-31).

Likewise, Jesus draws the sad conclusion at the end of this passage:

"But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"