

Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time – C

Lk 6:39-45

Dear Friends,

Today's gospel is actually a summary of Jesus' Sermon on the Plain and its invitations into the upside down world of Jesus. The blind guides he warns us about are those who think they see clearly. The people who admit their limited vision and pocket-sized understanding of God's ways are the ones who we can trust to direct us toward the light that helps us to see as Jesus.

Today, Luke again addresses the incredibly demanding task of being fair and just with our neighbor. Luke is reminding us of the severe difficulty of the relations between human beings. It is exceptional to really know what is going on inside another person. When it comes to retribution or justice we need divine wisdom. God sees the heart and acts with generosity, understanding and compassion. We are invited through today's gospel message to try to do the same.

Last week's selection ended with the admonition not to judge and condemn our brothers and sisters and everybody else! Today's first set of examples has two statements that are brilliantly clear about not judging and condemning our neighbor. They are the blind leading the blind and the hilariously obvious observation about the beam in the eye. Both of these insights surround and enlighten the main message of Luke in this section: **"No disciple is superior to his teacher; but when fully trained every disciple will be like his teacher."** (Lk 6:40)

The carpenter-shop example of the beam seems quite appropriate to our common experience. Our awareness of judging and condemning others most often comes slowly and in small steps. It is not as if we can simply pull the beam out of our blinded eye. We have to do the carpenter thing. We need to shave it down in a small step-by step-process.

An example of this is how we get rid of some of the common destructive forces in our culture: racism, sexism, consumerism and ageism. These realities block us in our relationship with our neighbor. We do not wake up one day and have mindset totally free to embrace racial equality or completely enthused about the LBGT agenda or free of desire for the next upgrade on our many possessions or really accepting of the aging process.

We constantly struggle to enter into Jesus' gospel reality. So often, it is the blind leading the blind. We see this in the sexual abuse scandal in the Church. It is the beam that hinders our experience of the "other" whether that "other" is our mother-in-law or the illegal immigrant driving the car without the smog sticker.

Getting the beam out of our eye is a long journey. We move forward with the help of our Sunday liturgy, daily personal prayer and truly compassionate patience with others. It is all

about becoming like our teacher. The sayings in today's gospel are simply making concrete what Jesus taught us last week: **"Be merciful as you Father is merciful."** (Lk 6:36)

We begin to become like our teacher when we acknowledge our sinfulness and blindness. This is the easiest way to shave the beam of our egoism and self-grandiosity. This gentle but consistent shaving of the beam frees us to see with eyes of compassion, forgiveness and love. This is keeping our eyes on Jesus.

In the final section of today's gospel, Jesus makes the clear and obvious point. Our heart is the true indication of our commitment. Only a clean heart produces good fruit. The image of the tree and its yield of good fruit demonstrate what is happening when there is authenticity in the person. The words of our lips ultimately only have meaning if they are connected to a wholesome heart. Good fruit happens only when the heart is focused on God's call to walk with Jesus.