

# Scripture Study

8th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C



## Opening prayer

Sirach 27:4-7

(Ps 92:2-3, 13-14, 15-16)

1 Corinthians 15:54-58

**Luke 6:39-45**

## Overview of the Gospel:

- This Sunday we complete a teaching which was begun two weeks ago – the Sermon on the Plain. We began with the beatitudes and curses, and last week we heard that we are to love our enemies. This week we will hear Jesus' teaching on uprightness of heart.
- Unlike Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" which appears in Matthew's Gospel in which similar words of warning were directed at the Scribes and Pharisees, here Jesus addresses not false teachers but the disciples; who are blind until they have their eyes opened by Jesus' teaching. Once they have learned to apply his teaching, they will be able to teach others.
- The hyperbolic language used by Jesus comparing the beam in one's own eye to the splinter in our neighbor's eye brings home the point that it is foolish to correct the faults of others when we have not overcome our even greater faults.
- The heart is the center of the person and the origin of all moral decisions. Whatever is in our hearts will come out in our words and deeds, looks like a tree is known by the fruit it bears (Matthew 7:15-20; 12:33-37; 15:18-20)

## Questions:

- In the first reading, Sirach tells us that what is really inside of a person is evident by what comes out of their mouth. How can we more effectively cultivate inner holiness so that it is reflected in our speech?
- In the second reading, since everyone dies anyway, what difference does dying or not dying in sin make? What is the victory over death that we have in Christ?
- In the Gospel reading, Jesus is obviously not talking about literal blind persons or beams and splinters. What is he alluding to in this parable? In what ways are you spiritually blind? What beam-sized vices have you not removed before reproaching others for relatively smaller "splinters"?
- Why is the comparison between a tree that bears either good or bad fruit an apt image? Are those results that can be easily concealed? What does the fruit in your life say about your inner life? How can you go about beginning to improve the fruit of holiness in your life?
- How do you speak when you become irritated or impatient? How do you speak of others (especially family members) who do not behave as you would wish? What do your speech habits say about "the abundance" of your heart?

**Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 1803-1811**

## Closing Prayer

**Remember to read and meditate this week on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!**

*"Let us follow in his footsteps, driving out vice by virtue: pride by humility, impatience by patience, injustice by justice, impurity by perfect chastity and continence, vainglory by God's honor and glory—so that whatever we do and accomplish may be for the glory, praise, honor, and spread of our Jesus' name." -St. Catherine of Siena*

# "Do you not see the log in your own eye?"

**Scripture:** Luke 6:39-45

**Meditation:** Are you clear-sighted, especially in your perception of sin and the need for each of one of us to see ourselves correctly as God sees us - with our faults, weaknesses, and strengths? Jesus' two parables about poor vision allude to the proverb: Without vision the people perish! (Proverbs 29:18) What can we learn from the illustration of a blind guide and a bad eye (the log in the eye)? A bad eye left untreated and a blind guide can cause a lot of trouble that will only end in misery and disaster for us! We can only help and teach others what we have learned and received from wise teachers and guides. And how can we help others overcome their faults if we are blinded by our own faults and misperceptions? We are all in need of a physician who can help us overcome the blind spots and failing of own sins, weaknesses, and ignorance.

The Gospel of Luke was written by a disciple who was trained as a physician. Luke, with keen insight, portrays Jesus as the good physician and shepherd of souls who seeks out those who desire healing, pardon, and restoration of body, mind, and spirit. Jesus came to free us from the worst oppression possible - slavery to sin, fear, and condemnation. Like a gentle and skillful doctor, the Lord Jesus exposes the cancer of sin, evil, and oppression in our lives so we can be set free and restored to wholeness. A key step to healing and restoration requires that we first submit to the physician who can heal us. The Lord Jesus is our great Physician because he heals the whole person - soul and body, mind and heart - and restores us to abundant life both now and for the age to come in his everlasting kingdom.

The Lord Jesus wants to heal and restore us to wholeness, not only for our own sake alone. He also wants us to be his instruments of healing, pardon, and restoration for others as well. What can hinder us from helping others draw near to Jesus the divine

Physician? The Rabbis taught: "He who judges his neighbor favorably will be judged favorably by God." How easy it is to misjudge others and how difficult it is to be impartial in giving good judgment. Our judgment of others is usually "off the mark" because we can't see inside the other person, or we don't have access to all the facts, or we are swayed by instinct and unreasoning reactions to people. It is easier to find fault in others than in oneself. A critical and judgmental spirit crushes rather than heals, oppresses rather than restores, repels rather than attracts. "Thinking the best of other people" is necessary if we wish to grow in love. And kindness in judgment is nothing less than a sacred duty.

Jesus states a heavenly principle we can stake our lives on: what you give to others (and how you treat others) will return to you (Mark 4:24). The Lord knows our faults and he sees all, even the imperfections and sins of the heart which we cannot recognize in ourselves. Like a gentle father and a skillful doctor, he patiently draws us to his seat of mercy and removes the cancer of sin which inhabits our hearts. Do you trust in God's mercy and grace? Ask the Lord to flood your heart with his loving-kindness and mercy that you may only have room for charity, forbearance, and kindness towards your neighbor.

Why does Jesus set figs and grapes over against thorns and brambles (Luke 6:33-35)? The fig tree was the favorite of all trees for the people of Palestine. It symbolized fertility, peace, and prosperity. Grapes, likewise, produced wine, the symbol of joy. Thorns and brambles were only good for burning as fuel for the fire. There's a proverbial saying that you know a tree by its fruit. Likewise a person will produce good or bad fruit depending on what is sown in the heart. Charles Read said: "Sow an act and you reap a habit. Sow a habit and you reap a character. Sow a character and you reap a destiny." Character, like fruit, doesn't grow overnight. It takes a lifetime.

Jesus connects soundness with good fruit. Something is sound when it is free from defect, decay, or disease and is healthy. Good fruit is the result of sound living - living according to moral truth and upright character. The prophet Isaiah warned against the dangers of falsehood: Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness (Isaiah 5:20). The fruits of falsehood produce an easy religion which takes the iron out of religion, the cross out of Christianity, and any teaching which eliminates the hard sayings of Jesus, and which push the judgments of God into the background and makes us think lightly of sin.

How do we avoid falsehood and bad fruit in our lives? By being true - true to God, his word, and the grace and help he gives us so we can turn away from evil and wrongdoing. And that takes character! Those who are true to God know that their strength lies not in themselves but in God who supplies everything we need to live as his disciples. The Lord strengthens us with the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit - with faith, hope and love, justice, prudence, fortitude and temperance. And we grow in godly character through exercising the gifts and strength which God supplies. Do you want to bear good fruit in your daily life? Allow the Holy Spirit to train you in godliness and the wisdom to distinguish good fruit from bad fruit (1 Timothy 4:7-8, Hebrews 5:14).

*"O Father, give us the humility which realizes its ignorance, admits its mistakes, recognizes its need, welcomes advice, accepts rebuke. Help us always to praise rather than to criticize, to sympathize rather than to discourage, to build rather than to destroy, and to think of people at their best rather than at their worst. This we ask for your name's sake."* (Prayer of William Barclay, 1907-1978)

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Author: Don Schwager