

Parables about blindness, specks/planks, good and bad fruit, wise/foolish builders - Adam Heather

- Encourage your Collective to share stories about God at work in their lives. The stories don't have to be dramatic.

Luke 6v37-45 (cf Matt 7v1-6)

Adam is reading *The Hidden Life of Trees* (Peter Wohlleben) and in it there is reference to a tree stump that has no life of its own but nearby trees join their roots to support it and bring it back to life. No tree is a forest but a forest can sustain life. Likewise, the church is a colony of heaven on earth - we're God's eco-system!

Jesus is often vague, using parables and answering questions with questions but when talking about prayer and dealing with each other he gets very specific. We often quote "*When two or three are gathered together*" (Matt 18v20) as encouragement, but it is set in the context of dealing with conflict.

Today's passage is directed to disciples and the church. Today there is a culture of "you do you" - acceptance and lack of judgement but also cancel culture where if your views don't fit then you're excluded. "*It's the digital equivalent of the medieval mob roaming the streets looking for someone to burn*" Rowan Atkinson.

Jesus gets our attention "*Do not judge or you will be judged by the same measure.*" Jesus isn't saying there is no moral code, (it comes after Sermon on Mount). There are consequences to our actions - we have a duty of care to others. Take our plank out so we can help others. Need good judgement without being judgemental. We're the subject of this parable! Jesus is teasing us to active thought. The one with the plank was unaware of their problem and so their vision is impaired. This makes them a hypocrite (def. An actor on stage: Greek actors wore masks.) We interrupt the story from underneath. We can lack integrity and congruity.

Public and private life should be the same. Don't wear a mask to church, being arrogant, superior or insecure. To remove a speck out of our eye go to a bright place and look in the mirror. Takes time, focus and precision. Need to come in humility before God and self, admitting our imperfections. "None are more unjust in their judgements of others than those who have a high opinion of themselves" CH Spurgeon.

Coming to God to remove our plank we see clearly, we receive grace and compassion and can empathise with the person who has the speck. But 1 Jn 2v11 (hating others means we're living in darkness). "*If you judge people, you have no time to love them*" Mother Theresa "*God's truth judges created things out of love and satan's truth judges them out of envy and hatred*" D Bonhoeffer.

Jesus' audacious message is "Love your enemies" (Lk 6v24ff) and then ties these 4 parables together. So, "some are blind, hypocritical, bearing bad fruit on poor foundations whilst others produce good fruit, hear and act and build on a foundation of rock." Some wear a mask, are arrogant and judgemental. Others hear Jesus' words and build life on a solid foundation.

Having our plank removed, we know it hurts so we are more likely to be kind to the one with the speck. Matt 7v1 adds "*as you judge so will you be judged*" This is positive. Be gentle, careful and minimise pain. Response should always be positive. We need to do "heart work" before we engage in conversation. Aim is not to be judgmental nor condemning but with holiness, grace and gentleness.

For Reflection in Collective:

- Why is it so easy for our public and personal lives to sometimes be so different?
- Why do we feel the need to put on masks to get through the day?
- What would help us to become people with better integrity and congruity?
- How might this teaching help us think differently if we feel we need to confront someone?
- How can we encourage one another this week?