

Preacher: Pastor Twyla

Scripture: Luke 6:39-49

³⁹ He also told them a parable: "Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ A disciple is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully qualified will be like the teacher. ⁴¹ Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? ⁴² Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye.

A Tree and Its Fruit

⁴³ "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; ⁴⁴ for each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. ⁴⁵ The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.

The Two Foundations

⁴⁶ "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I tell you? ⁴⁷ I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. ⁴⁸ That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹ But the one who hears, and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house."

Today, according to the liturgical calendar is Transfiguration Sunday. The transfiguration story in the Gospel of Luke has us taking a trip with Jesus and three of his disciples to a mountaintop where something quite marvelous happens. Luke tells us in 9:29-31, "And while Jesus was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." The disciples who were there had been sleepy and when they became fully awake, they saw this marvelous sight. They didn't know what to think or say, and what was said was somewhat foolish. Then we are told a voice—the voice of God—came from a cloud saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." The disciples afterwards, never mentioned a word about the experience to anyone.

For Jesus, who was about to head for Jerusalem, where he would endure suffering and death on the cross, this was a moment of reassurance that he was pleasing his Father. In talking with Moses and Elijah, he received the encouragement to move forward with God's plan. How comforting it must have been to have these comrades in his intimate circle, recognizing him as the Messiah; which is something we see even his disciples struggling to fully embrace, at least not until after the resurrection.

There is a striking sentence in the transfiguration text where it says that when the 3 apostles were fully awake they saw his glory. There are many things in life that can lull us to

sleep and keep us from seeing the glory of Jesus; but life is also full of things designed to awaken us.

Over the last two weeks my sermon focus has been from the lectionary texts found in Luke 6. There we found a series of challenging teachings delivered by Jesus. Some of the things we have been taking a look at can lull us to sleep spiritually as some of them can make us feel uncomfortable, therefore avoiding them. Remember the woes? Remember, loving your enemies? Yet when we do as God said to those gathered on the top of the mountain, "listen to him", meaning Jesus, we awaken and see the glory of Jesus, and that makes a difference in our lives. The more we see the glory of Jesus, the more we are drawn to him; and the more our souls become one with him. We shine with spirits of light, just as Jesus did in those moments of the transfiguration.

The lectionary also offered for this week, the eighth week after Epiphany, another text to use for this Sunday. The text follows on the heels of what we reviewed of the teachings of Jesus earlier in Luke 6. When making my decision for today's sermon theme, I felt it is important for us to complete a study on this series of Jesus' hard sermons found in Luke 6. I especially felt this was the correct move after revisiting thoughts on the transfiguration text during my study for the text I chose for today. This only points to the reality that all the scriptures come together to open our eyes to the truths found in the Word that direct us towards God.

A scuba diver once said that he had been in water so deep and dark that it was almost impossible to keep from becoming disoriented. What a terrifying feeling, being underwater, unable to see your hands in front of your face, not knowing which way is up, panic engulfing you. He was asked, "So what do you do?" The diver said, "I feel the bubbles." "Feel the bubbles?" he was asked. "That's right. When it's pitch-black and you have no idea which way to go, you reach up with your hand and feel the bubbles. The bubbles always drift to the surface. When you can't trust your feelings or judgement, you can always trust the bubbles to get you back to the top."

Sometimes in life we get disoriented and desperate. At other times, we find ourselves drifting aimlessly. God knew we would need advice and instructions about how to live. In the sixty-six books of the Bible, we have a reality library – stories, letters, guidelines and examples from God that tell us what is true and real. They all fit together to help us walk the journey of faith.

So, with this in mind and building along-side the story of the transfiguration story, on what makes a good disciple who has seen the glory of Jesus, let us now turn our attention to this section of Jesus' sermon which contains a string of parables, each giving direction to what makes a good disciple. The first parable in verses 39-40, a disciple needs to learn from the right teacher. The second parable in verses 41-42, we hear that before we can help someone else, we need to attend to our own faults. The parable in verses 43-45 direct our attention to the fact that to be good guiding disciples, we need to have a good heart and integrity of character. And finally in the fourth parable, verses 46-49 we learn that a good disciple has a firm foundation, Jesus and his teachings. We're going to take a few moments to look at each of these

Luke tells us in chapter 6, verses 39-40, that Jesus said that we should choose wisely who will be our teachers and leaders. Why? Because they will likely be the ones we emulate. If my goal is to follow Jesus and his teachings, then I will seek out those who emulate and teach the ways of Jesus. We should look for advisors, with the heart of Jesus, who will show us more about faith and whose guidance we can trust.

In other words, we should see the Spirit of Christ living in and through them; because as we learn from them and grow in our understanding and relationship with Jesus, those we share the Gospel with will see Christ in us. While we will never be perfect like Jesus, we will be better qualified to lead those who don't know Jesus, to him and to following his ways. We don't want to be like the blind leading the blind. Our goal as disciples is to strive to be like Jesus. The parables that follow define more clearly what this entails.

The parable in verses 41-42 is graphic as it makes its point. It cautions us on passing judgement on others. It points out a common human weakness to point out and make much of even the slightest faults in others while ignoring our own faults, even though our own faults might be greater. It's like the saying, "If a man has limburger cheese on his upper lip, he thinks the whole world smells."

Jesus isn't telling us we should ignore the wrongdoings of others, but we should not be so concerned about others' faults that we overlook our own faults. Sometimes we rationalize our faults by pointing out the same faults in others. Jesus calls those who judge others and rationalize their own sins, "hypocrites." Hypocrites refuse to look at their own faults and make changes, yet at the same time want to espouse the Word of God and do good things in other ways.

What good is that in pointing the way to Jesus? Instead of judging others, the better example to others would be to repent of our own wrongdoings, thereby showing that God's grace and mercy on us all is really a thing available to us all. It shows that it is possible to clear the way for redemption through Christ.

The third parable in verses 43-45 teaches us about producing good fruit. This metaphor is found elsewhere in the bible. One example is found in Matthew 7:16-20, this metaphor is used to warn us that false prophets bear bad fruit. Luke does not associate the problem of bad fruit to false prophets. Instead, what Luke speaks of is the daily living that is required of a disciple is not to be superficial faith, not just a show, but genuine. Discipleship requires more than just good deeds and words; it requires integrity and purity of heart such as we find in Jesus.

The parable points out the obvious as a metaphor, that a good tree in good condition will produce good fruit; and that each tree produces its' own kind of fruit. Then Jesus shifts from using the example of trees and fruit, to describing what this looks like in people. We are all storehouses for good or evil thoughts or deeds.

What is stored in us then, influences what we do and say, which is referenced in what Jesus states, that "the mouth speaks what the heart is full of." Likewise, we can say that the way we see one live, reveals what is stored up within one's heart. What we say and do is a reflection of who we are, meaning what is in one's heart.

A famous preacher of many years ago had a clock in his church that was well known for its inability to keep the time accurately. Sometimes too fast, sometimes too slow, it resisted all attempts to solve the problem. Finally, after its dubious fame became widespread, the preacher put a sign over the clock, reading, "Don't blame the hands-the trouble lies deeper." The same is true of people: the real trouble lies deeper than what shows on the surface. Jesus' message teaches us that a good disciple needs to have a good heart, and the integrity of character.

At the conclusion of Jesus' sermon in verses 46-49, we find the fourth parable discussing the need for a firm foundation for our faith and the role we take on as Jesus' disciples. The parable addresses the fact that people call him "Lord," yet do not do what he tells them to do. His question distinguishes the difference between right confession and true discipleship. Anyone can call him Lord, indicating they confess their wrongs and their need for him, yet no go a step

further to living a life of being an authentic disciple. The parable flows from this questioning as it explores the contrast between those who hear and act and those who hear and do not act.

The parable uses the example of building a house with a good foundation built in deep ground and on solid rock, as opposed to building a house on shallow weak ground without a foundation. We might wonder why anyone would do something so foolish. I found it helpful when thinking about this to read this list of explanations in my Life Application Bible: People do this "perhaps to save time and avoid the hard work of preparing the stone. Possibly because the waterfront scenery is more attractive or because beach houses have higher social status than houses on rocky areas. Perhaps because they want to join their friends who have already settled on sandy areas. Maybe because they haven't heard or take seriously about the violent storms that come, because they can't imagine any such disasters happening to them."

These could be used as metaphors for why people fall into the category of not being true disciples. A true disciple builds a firm foundation making them not only a hearer of the word but a doer of the word. Everyone knows that a house built with a firm foundation has a better chance to stand strong over the test of time, and to be able to withstand the storms that hit it with great force. The true Christian knows that the same applies to having a firm foundation for our faith.

Jesus and his teachings and obedience to him are the foundation of the faith of those who love him, of those who follow him and of those who are his disciples. Jesus is our solid rock on which we stand. And as we do so, we see even more clearly His glory, and we inch closer and closer to him, even as we fight the battles of life. His glory is then revealed to the world as we are disciples in this world for him, helping to build God's kingdom.

We don't want to find ourselves lulled to sleep by taking Jesus and his teachings for granted, nor by running away from the challenges put before us by his teachings that might make us squirm. Look instead, blessed disciples, into his glory and find strength and guidance for each new day. Absorb, assimilate his glorious light and let it shine for all to see. Amen.