

## Homily

03.03.2019 – Eighth Week in Ordinary Time

Sir 27:4-7 I Cor 15:54-58 Lk 6:39-58



There are several references to trees and the fruit that they bear in today's readings. The first reading declares that the orchard where the tree grows is judged on the quality of its fruit. The responsorial psalm speaks of trees that still bear fruit when they are old. In the gospel reading, Jesus declares that the nature of every tree can be told by its own fruit. In each of these three instances, the reference is not primarily to trees and their fruit as to people and their qualities.

Today, unfortunately, one's word is frequently not trusted as one's bond. What seems to be missing is personal integrity. That's one of the qualities we should want to carry with us always in this life; it's surely one of the criteria on which we shall be judged. Integrity means wholeness, being complete and not divided in any way – physically, spiritually, or esthetically. Integrity of character avoids any and all kinds of duplicity, deception, artificiality, or shallowness. Today's Liturgy calls us to reflect and develop personal integrity.

Today's Gospel is a series of three unrelated separate sayings of Jesus harvested into one place. The three sayings have to do with **the blind leading the blind, the splinter in a companion's eye, and a good tree and its fruits.**

Jesus applies these principles to several areas. For one thing (vv. 39f.), there isn't much sense to leaders trying to guide others until and unless the leaders have been there themselves. For another thing (v. 41f.), we ought to have enough integrity to see both others and ourselves honestly. Jesus must have been exercising his sense of humor when he compared a splinter in a neighbor's eye with a whole wooden beam in one's own. His idea can be encapsulated in the old saying that there's so much bad in the best of us and so much good in the worst of us that it hardly befits any of us to talk about the rest of us. To the Christian disciple (you, me and the whole church) who's concerned with the faults of another and ignores his own, Jesus applies the word "hypocrite", a designation he had previously given only to the scribes and Pharisees.

### **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? 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. Today we have to reflect upon "whether we are guided by blind or not? Are we the blind guide? – in the family, in the society, in the church?"

### **Jesus, the greatest and divine 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. So let us submit the whole church, country family to Jesus, the greatest and divine physician. He will do the best.

### **Thinking the best of others**

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 cannot see inside the other person, we do not 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.

### **What you give to others will return to you**

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, patience, and kindness towards your neighbor.

### **Producing good fruit versus bad fruit in our lives**

Jesus declares that just as good fruit reveals that the tree it came from, is sound or healthy, so the goodness that someone displays by their words and deeds reveals that their 'heart' is sound and healthy, or, in the words of the gospel reading, that their heart contains a store of goodness. When Jesus speaks of 'heart' here, he is speaking about the person's inner core, the deepest part of their reality. If our inner core is good, it will be visible in what we say and do. In the very last sentence of the gospel reading, Jesus highlights, in particular, how the words we speak often reveal the quality of that inner core, 'a person's words flow out of what fills their heart'. We can all be good at hiding our true selves from others, and even from ourselves, but our speech often gives us away.

We often say that actions speak louder than words, and, yet, the words we speak are themselves actions, and some of our most influential actions are the words that we speak. Harmful words can cause as much distress to someone as harmful actions. Wounds from words do not heal so easily. Speech is a means of testing the inner character of a person, because what comes in speech betrays what's in our heart. Speech is a means of testing the inner character of a person, because what comes in speech betrays what's in our 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, does not grow overnight. It takes a lifetime.

### **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. Moreover, 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).

**Let us pray:**

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.

**Jesus, I trust in you.**