



into a pit? The disciple is not superior to his teacher; the fully trained disciples will always be like his teacher. Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own? How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take out the splinter that is in your eye," when you cannot see the plank in your own? Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take out the splinter that is in your brother's eye.

"There is no sound tree that produces rotten fruit, nor again a rotten tree that produces sound fruit. For every tree can be told by its own fruit; people do not pick figs from thorns, nor gather grapes from brambles. A good man draws what is good from the store of goodness in his heart; a bad man draws what is bad from the store of badness. For a man's words flow out of what fills his heart."

■ The Gospel of the Lord.



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REMOVING THE PLANK

I lived once with a senior priest who was rather prone to correcting the faults of others and putting them right when he thought they had got things wrong. Asked once by a younger member of the community whether he had ever been wrong himself, he replied: 'Just once—when I thought I'd made a mistake but then discovered that I had been right all along!'

That man did a lot of good work over a long life. But perhaps he hadn't reflected on Jesus' words in today's Gospel today as much as he did on other parts of Scripture.

The illustrations to which Jesus appeals—one blind person leading another; attempting to remove the splinter in a neighbour's eye when one has a plank in one's own—are exaggerated and humorous. The original hearers probably fell about laughing. It seems that Jesus often appealed to images like these in order to penetrate people's defences and get them to think. It hard enough to know what is in one's own heart—to recognise the 'plank' that may be there, inhibiting right vision and accurate judgement. Yet, even so, we are still confident that we can see and so we set about commenting upon and seeking to root out the failings of others.

If God, who really does see the heart, acts with such generosity, understanding and compassion, then that—not judgement and condemnation—should surely be the model for human interaction.

Jesus' final image in the Gospel invites us to ask what our thoughts, words and actions say about our own hearts.

Brendan Byrne, SJ

FIRST READING

Sir 27: 4-7

A reading from the Book of Sirach.

Do not praise someone before they have spoken.

In a shaken sieve the rubbish is left behind, so too the defects of a man appear in his talk. The kiln tests the work of the potter, the test of a man is in his conversation.

The orchard where the tree grows is judged on the quality of its fruit, similarly a man's words betray what he feels. Do not praise a man before he has spoken, since this is the test of men.

■ The word of the Lord.

RESP PSALM

Ps 91: 2-3, 13-16. R. cf. v. 2

R. Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

1. It is good to give thanks to the Lord / to make music to your name, O Most High, / to proclaim your love in the morning / and your truth in the watches of the night. **R.**

2. The just will flourish like the palm-tree / and grow like a Lebanon cedar. **R.**

3. Planted in the house of the Lord / they will flourish in the courts of our God, / still bearing sap when they are old, / still full sap, still green, / to proclaim that the Lord is just. / In him, my rock, there is no wrong. **R.**

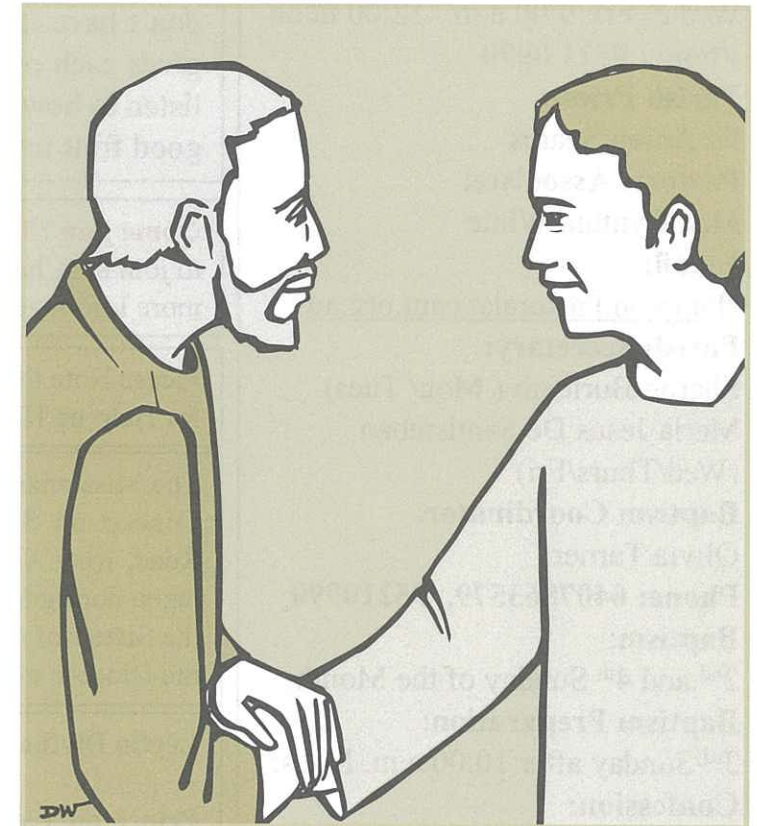
SECOND READING

1 Cor 15: 54-58

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians.

Victory has been given to us through Jesus Christ.

When this perishable nature has put on imperishability, and when this mortal nature has put on immortality, then the words of scripture will come true: Death is swallowed up in victory. Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting? Now the sting of death is



sin, and sin gets its power from the Law. So let us thank God for giving us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Never give in then, my dear brothers, never admit defeat; keep on working at the Lord's work always, knowing that, in the Lord, you cannot be labouring in vain.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Phil 2: 15-16

Alleluia, alleluia!

Shine on the world like bright stars; you are offering it the word of life. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Lk 6: 39-45

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

A person speaks from what is in his heart.

Jesus told a parable to his disciples. 'Can one blind man guide another? Surely both will fall