**The Holy Gospel according to 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 neighbour’seye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? **42**Or how can you say to your neighbour, ‘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 neighbour’s eye.

**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.

**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.”

This is the gospel of Christ

Please be seated

Two weeks ago, we began with Luke’s version of the beatitudes, which abbreviated the nine beatitudes of Matthew down to four beatitudes and four woes. Luke implored us to not just have belief, but to actively offer our ministry to others, wherever it can be of help.

Last week, Luke continued encouraging us to love our enemies, to turn the other cheek, to let them take you coat, and so on.

In this concluding section today of Luke’s sermon on the plain, Jesus turns his attention specifically towards the behaviour of his disciples towards others in the community of faith. The variety of his reflection, and the shifts in analogies make this reading seem a bit of a pot puri collection.

We begin with talk of the blind leading the blind. While the outcome of such an enterprise is unlikely to be fruitful, I can identify with it by walking our dogs, where they can have quite fixed opinions and they decide where we are going.

Then we progress to the tree with the bad fruit, and finally, where the best place to build a house. But they are all united in the conviction that behaviour and character cannot be separated. What one does inevitably stems from the sort of person that one is. What a person is, quite often reveals itself in what one does, and a person who attempts to correct another’s flaws without understanding his or her own flaws is not sufficiently self-aware. Luke reports on Jesus’ concern for his disciples. The concern simply being that before we pass judgement levelled at others in the community, we should look at our own behaviour. He relates to this with the analogy of the blind leading the blind. Our sensitivity towards leading or helping the blind must include the giving of light for the right kind of vision.

Luke tells us that when these practices become second nature, one becomes the kind of person that Jesus likens to a tree bearing good fruit, and a house that we build on a solid foundation.

It may be difficult to hear the point of these admonitions if we are honest about our inability to radically change our normal responses to people who annoy us.

Additionally, we may find it difficult to hear Jesus’ point about the image of the tree and its fruit, because the words good and bad get in our way. For many of us, it is too simplistic to say that a tree or a person is bad. If we were to classify someone as good or bad, this suggests a unilateral judgement. Certainly, we all have failings, but no one is all good or all bad, although I must admit, Putin is certainly working on it.

A sound tree does not produce rotten fruit. A sound tree is stable, but it bends with the wind, is flexible, yielding excellent fruit. Now while the fruit might not win awards for great colour and shape, it shows us that being sound is a multi-faceted characteristic, and certainly not a unilateral one.

That a person might be sound like a tree may give us a way to understand Jesus’ calling, a calling for us to stand on firm ground as we face today’s choices moment by moment. What we do towards ourselves, and others comes from the heart. Our interactions with others become a storehouse of what might be called character. In the end, the point is that a tree – in whatever shape it finds itself – yields fruit in keeping with its character and its capacities.

The other teaching concerning the house is a parable, because a comparison is made between God’s kingdom, actions or expectations and something in this world. It offers a portrait of someone who not only hears Jesus’ words, but lives in accordance with them. If you act on God’s word, you will build upon a foundation that will not fall apart under stress. Your foundation will be embedded in what might be likened to an immovable rock. This stress I refer to pertains to life’s exceedingly difficult challenges. We are all subject to trials in our work, and with family, our civic responsibilities, the environmental choices we face, and also our health and private spiritual struggles. This daily strain of life and its associated challenges is depicted as flood water against which the house – that is, the person (or community) you have become because of the values on which you have based your actions – will either stand or fall.

Anyone who has been faced with rising waters, whether life threatening or not, knows how hard it is to confront something as unmanageable as water which has breached its banks, you can scoop it up, but it just keeps coming. Jesus relates the stress of our lives with this analogy. Listening to his divine word is the guide to life, the source of our strength, and the measure for these choices in life. It builds our capacity to keep on keeping on when we face a daily world where God’s word gives us the power to stand firm and endure.

Luke presents us with a challenge. We must behave as Jesus teaches. To come to Jesus as the multitude does in Luke’s teaching is not enough. Being present and listening must end in action, in obedience, and one recent trend in ethics has emphasised the importance of character in shaping our ethical behaviour. A good person acts in in ways that are not simply appropriate, but also fair minded and just.

Fortunately for us, Christ does not differentiate between those who act perfectly and those who act imperfectly, stumbling along the way. God is fully aware of each of our shortcomings and the need to receive the church’s assurance that despite human failure and sin, we must have love and compassion for all. We must pray for people who do not in our eyes measure up, but also, we must take a good long look at ourselves and endeavour ourselves to bear good fruit. Remember, Christ’s love for all of us abounds, he loves us all. Through the word of God, through listening and internalising it, we can become a people on a rock that will not be destroyed. The character we build as people must be like that house we build. That character must be our ethical foundation and Christian principle, which will withstand any storm that comes our way.

Amen