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Luke 6:39-42 Splinters and Logs

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In preparing my remarks today, I visited an unusual site for additional information about Splinters – the Mayo Clinic. This is what I learned. If you get a foreign object in your eye, wash your hands with soap and water. Try to flush the object out of your eye with a gentle stream of clean, warm water. Use an eyecup or a small, clean drinking glass positioned with its rim resting on the bone at the base of your eye socket. Another way to flush a foreign object from your eye is to get into a shower and aim a gentle stream of lukewarm water on your forehead over the affected eye while holding your eyelid open. If you're wearing contact lenses, it's best to remove the lens before or while you're irrigating the surface of the eye with water. Sometimes a foreign body can be embedded on the undersurface of the lens. Caution: don't try to remove an object that is imbedded in the eye. Don't rub the eye. Get immediate medical help.

It's not so simple to remove a splinter. First of all, it's a process. It's not a one-step procedure. In taking each step, a person may discover that the foreign object is embedded on the undersurface of the lens in the eye and one must seek medical help to remove it. So it is with us.

In today's Gospel text, Jesus uses three images to help us understand his teaching: blind guides, student teachers and splinters and logs. Let's look at each one.

Blind Guides

Jesus asks *"Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit?"*

There's a story about a blind man at the crossroad of a busy intersection. Another blind man walked up beside the first and said, "Help across the street?" The first blind person thought he was offering, not asking for, help so he said, "Sure." Together they stepped off the curb and into the traffic. Cars went screeching to a halt. Onlookers screamed warnings. Both were almost run over.

This is the way it is when we're spiritually blind. We all have blind spots, those areas of our vision where we think we can see but we really can't. Drivers call these areas blind spots so it's helpful when the driver is changing lanes to do a shoulder check.

In his book, *Breathing Under Water*, Richard Rohr writes about shadow boxing, that part of us that we don't want to see that allows us to do unhealthy things without even recognizing they're unhealthy, such as overworking, overeating, shopping for "wants" rather than needs and so on. When we escape into these types of behaviors, we need to remember that our God sees us from the inside. We have a God who sees our goodness and our weaknesses AND does not condemn or judge us for our shortcomings. We might want to ask ourselves, "What are my blind spots?"

Student Leaders

Jesus said, *“No disciple is superior to the teacher; but when fully trained, every disciple will be like his or her teacher.”*

Imagine, for a moment, if a grade school child came home from school and told his/her parent that at school, from now on, the children were the teachers and the teachers were going to sit in the desks and take notes, do assignments, take the tests to be handed in to the students and give the grades. Needless to say, the parents would be outraged. They send their children to school to learn from the teacher who has more knowledge, training and expertise.

Jesus also said *“When fully trained every disciple will be like his/her teacher.”* Jesus is the trainer/teacher in our lives and to be fully trained, we need only to ask ourselves what would Jesus do? and go and do likewise. Jesus made friends with sinners and women; he touched the untouchables; he brought glad tidings to the poor, proclaimed liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and release to prisoners. ... Such is our call.

What teachers have had an everlasting influence in my life? How or when did I allow Jesus to teach me?

Splinters and logs

Jesus asks a question, *“Why do you notice the splinter in your sister or brother’s eye but do not perceive the log in your own eye? How can you say let me remove the splinter in your eye when you do not even notice the log in your own? You hypocrite. Remove the log in your eye then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your sister or brother’s eye.”*

In this text, Jesus could not have made his point clearer – to look at ourselves first. We are not the one with the splinter. We are the ones with the log!

One commentator suggested that this is one time we need to adopt a “me first” attitude ... that we become eye – INSPECTORS.” I must scrutinize myself first and look at my own life and search my own heart. I must look at my own faults and flaws and failures first. The question is not how could THEY have done something so reprehensible? but how could I have done something so dishonorable? Jesus uses the word hypocrite – a fraud, a phony, a charlatan. A strong word that demands robust honesty with self. If, perchance, I have trouble seeing my own failures and flaws, I need to ask Jesus to point them out to me. Self-honesty is the cornerstone upon which freedom to be who God made me to be – a good and holy person.

Let us ask God to

- + help us become more aware of our inadequacies so as to become gentle and non-judgmental in dealing with others;
- + help us think the best of others;
- + give us the grace to gaze upon others as God gazes at us.

In closing, I thought of a song that captures what I tried to say today:
Open my eyes Lord help me to see your face. Open my eyes Lord help me to see.
Open my ears Lord help me to hear your voice. Open my ears Lord help me to hear.
Open my heart Lord help me to love like you. Open my heart.
And the first shall be last and our eyes are opened and we'll:
 hear like never before
 speak in new ways
 see God's face in places we've never known.