

**SPIRITUALITY**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Philippians 2:15d, 16a

R. Alleluia, alleluia.  
Shine like lights in the world  
as you hold on to the word of life.  
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

**Gospel**

Luke 6:39-45; L84C

Jesus told his disciples a parable,  
“Can a blind person guide a blind  
person?

Will not both fall into a pit?  
No disciple is superior to the  
teacher;  
but when fully trained,  
every disciple will be like his  
teacher.

Why do you notice the splinter in  
your brother’s eye,  
but do not perceive the wooden  
beam in your own?

How can you say to your brother,  
‘Brother, let me remove that splinter  
in your eye,’  
when you do not even notice the  
wooden beam in your own eye?

You hypocrite! Remove the wooden  
beam from your eye first;  
then you will see clearly  
to remove the splinter in your broth-  
er’s eye.

“A good tree does not bear rotten fruit,  
nor does a rotten tree bear good  
fruit.

For every tree is known by its own  
fruit.

For people do not pick figs from  
thornbushes,  
nor do they gather grapes from  
brambles.

A good person out of the store of good-  
ness in his heart produces good,  
but an evil person out of a store of  
evil produces evil;  
for from the fullness of the heart the  
mouth speaks.”

**Reflecting on the Gospel**

We all have words to live by. Maybe they were told to us by parents or grand-  
parents, or perhaps a teacher or a relative. But we can all recall maxims by  
which we live. Today’s gospel gives us life lessons or words to live by. In fact, if  
read in isolation, this reading is broader than Christianity. It could readily be ac-  
cepted by non-Christians too. And such is often the case with life lessons. They  
are not limited to one religious or denominational outlook.

The life lessons Jesus teaches in this gospel are akin to homespun wisdom  
rooted in daily life and experience. When we say a project at work is being per-  
formed like “the blind leading the blind,” we  
are echoing Jesus’ teaching. Though we mean  
no disrespect to the blind, the metaphor is eas-  
ily grasped and understood.

And how often have we experienced the  
nitpicking nag who quickly points out the  
fault in others while conveniently overlooking  
his or her own. Jesus’ warning about noticing  
the splinter in another’s eye while neglecting  
the wooden beam in our own captures that  
sentiment well. Even so, Jesus is more ada-  
mant about us removing the beam from our  
own eye than simply not noticing the splinter  
in another.

The concluding bit of wisdom is based on  
lived experience as well. Just as a good tree

does not produce bad fruit, so it is with people. “By their fruits you shall know  
them” is another way to sum this up; “actions speak louder than words” is an-  
other. If a person is performing good works, it’s likely they are a good person.  
On the other hand, if a person performs only selfish acts, that, too, is a window  
into their soul, for as Jesus puts it, “[F]rom the fullness of the heart the mouth  
speaks.” Here the basis on one’s fundamental goodness is not whether they  
believe in Jesus, or even God. It’s not whether they go to church or synagogue.  
And given the time this was written, it’s certainly not about praying the rosary  
or attending First Fridays. Instead, a person’s heart is ultimately known by  
their words and actions. And actions speak louder than words. These are words  
to live by.

**Living the Paschal Mystery**

Churchy people can often and easily be caught up in churchy things. What  
colors are we displaying for the season? What song is most appropriate at this  
time? What is the second reading and how does it connect to the first? But today  
we are reminded by Jesus that there are many things broader and perhaps more  
important than church or even religious identity. We are told not to be hypo-  
critical, finding fault in others while overlooking our own. We are reminded to  
consider how one acts as an indication of that one’s character.

Jesus’ teaching and preaching was fundamental to his ministry. He was  
considered a sage and a prophet. His understanding of human beings moved  
the crowds. His insight into how we behave versus how we ought to behave, en-  
capsulated in pithy and memorable sayings was profound. And certainly after  
his death and resurrection his teaching carried new meaning. In light of his un-  
dergoing the paschal mystery, he is the Son of God raised to new life. His words  
are more than homespun wisdom. They are light and life.



**Focusing the Gospel**

**Key words and phrases:** every tree is known by its own fruit

**To the point:** Jesus lived in an agrarian culture where people tilled the soil to provide for themselves and their families. In today’s gospel he uses a metaphor that his audience would immediately have understood: “A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, / nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit. / For every tree is known by its own fruit.” We might ask, what “fruit” do we bear that marks us as Christians?

**Connecting the Gospel**

**to the first reading:** Just as “every tree is known by its own fruit,” the writer of Sirach counsels that the true test of a person’s heart is in their speech and conversation. The book of Sirach belongs to the category of wisdom literature in the Bible. Uprightness of speech is an important theme in all of wisdom literature. In the book of Proverbs we hear, “Dishonest mouth put away from you, / deceitful lips put far from you” (Prov 4:24; NABRE). Devious and crooked speech might include falsehoods, but gossip and slander are also condemned.

**to experience:** Survey your own conversation. What percentage of it might you categorize as righteous speech—words that uplift and inspire others? What percentage is crooked or devious—words that put others down or convey anger, hatred or enmity?

**Connecting the Responsorial Psalm**

**to the readings:** If slander, gossip, and lying are all speech that places a wedge between the speaker and his or her neighbors and God, what is godly speech? The psalms might be our best guide for speech that uplifts. In Psalm 92 we hear, “It is good to give thanks to the LORD, / to sing praise to your name, Most High.” Praise and thanksgiving are not only for the glory of God; these patterns of speech also change the one who is speaking. By focusing on gratitude and praise, one’s eyes are further opened to the countless gifts of God and the wonders of creation. Furthermore, the psalmist tells us that the one who is rooted in justice (right relationship with God and others) will “flourish like the palm tree . . . planted in the house of the LORD / shall flourish in the courts of our God. / They shall bear fruit even in old age.”

**to psalmist preparation:** As a cantor, your words within the liturgy lead the people in prayer and praise of God. How might you bring all the other words you speak throughout the week into better alignment with the ones you proclaim in the liturgy?

**PROMPTS FOR FAITH-SHARING**

The first reading from Sirach warns, “[T]he test of a person is in conversation” (NABRE). What do your own patterns and habits of speech reveal about you and about “the bent” of your heart?

St. Paul urges us to “be firm, steadfast, always fully devoted to the work of the Lord.” Where is God calling you to be steadfast at this time?

In the gospel we hear, “[E]very tree is known by its own fruit.” In what areas of your life are good fruits being born? Where is your life less fruitful?

Sometimes we are most distressed by the faults of others that we also notice subconsciously in ourselves. Where have you become preoccupied with a “splinter in your brother’s eye”? What might this preoccupation tell you about “the wooden beam in your own eye”?