

Parables of Luke 6

In this next set of parables, Jesus combines several lessons in series. These parables start with a couple that address the way that a person might follow after another. How does one choose whom he should Follow...and whom he should not follow? The first two of Jesus' teachings in this context address the idea of teachers and disciples.

The Blind Leading the Blind

Jesus' first parable asks: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall in the ditch?" (Luke 6:39) Here, Jesus made the clear point that those who need to be led should not be led by those who are blind. If one who is blind is trying to lead others, they will end up falling into the ditch. Jesus' second question in the parable is a rhetorical question. Rather than asking whether this would be the outcome or not, Jesus was making it clear that falling is what would happen! How could anything else happen?

Based on the context, we can deduce that Jesus was teaching about who the people should seek to follow in their spiritual journey. If they followed those who were not informed, then they would be led into the wrong direction, and even into destructive areas. If they were uninformed (blind) and they followed others that were likewise uninformed (blind), then they would be both perish!

This parable, like another that will shortly follow, is centered on the concept of *sight*. Sight was, and continues to be, a figure for being able to understand something clearly. Consider our own phrase, "I see!" That phrase is often used to identify that we have come to understand some principle that another is trying to convey to us. When we see something, we comprehend the idea or principle. The same thing can be said about Jesus' teaching. Those

who were blind did not have a good understanding of spiritual matters. There were many of the Jewish persuasion that thought that they knew, thought that they understood what God wanted for them. They thought that they were in good standing with Him, and that they were leading others in the right direction. However, they did not fully understand the nature or the message of the Messiah. They were *blind* as it pertained to God's plan. They could not see the truth, and they were leading many people away from God, rather than toward Him!

A Disciple is Not Above His Teacher

This second parable also speaks to the nature of the disciple and teacher dynamic. This one, however, relies upon an understanding of the type of education that a man in the first century would receive. Most education would have been based in philosophy. Teachers, who ascribed to one type of philosophy or another, would set up their own schools and take on students. They typically served as the only instructor, and would only take on a few students at a time at most. This type of a setting meant that the education that was received would be quite limited. A student would not be exposed to different ways of thinking, or approaches to various subjects. There was no real possibility of expanding an understanding beyond that of the teacher who was instructing. Occasionally, there may be those who were wealthy enough to study under more than one teacher, but that would be rare.

In this type of an educational environment, it would be impossible for a student to surpass his teacher, as the teacher was his only source of information. He could get all that the teacher had to teach, but nothing more. As he came to complete his education, or be "perfectly trained", he would end up being like his teacher.

When considering this from a secular standpoint, we should be able to see the great limitations. No instructor could be perfect, and that meant that there was always something more for the student to learn, or some area that he was lacking in. However, in the spiritual realm, Jesus was the perfect teacher. There was nothing that He lacked, and therefore those who were His disciples would grow to be like Him. This is a principle that is taught throughout

the New Testament. The goal of the disciples of Jesus is to grow to be as much like Him as they possibly can. One example of this type of teaching is found in Ephesians 4:

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:11–16)

Our goal, as the disciples of Christ, is to grow to perfection. We want to measure ourselves against Him, and understand that we have not attained our end goal until we reach that mark. Surely, as long as we live in this life, we know we will not reach that point, and so we will have something to work on for the rest of our lives!

One interesting note about the terminology that Jesus used in this parable should be made concerning the word disciple. This word indicates something more than a mere student. A disciple was one who adopted the same philosophy of the teacher that he studied under. C. G. Caldwell, in his commentary on the book of Luke made this point clearly:

*A **disciple** is a follower. He is more than a student. A political science student might learn about Adolph Hitler or Karl Marx, but not be a follower. A science student might learn about Charles Darwin, but not subscribe to his theories. A Bible student might learn about Martin Luther or John Calvin and not be a disciple of either. The true disciple adopts the thinking and philosophy of the teacher as his own. Even so, he does not rise above the teacher because what he has become as a result of the teaching is what the teacher is. He has admired the teacher and decided to imitate him. We are*

*to become like Jesus. We will not, however, rise above Him.*¹

A disciple is one who has committed himself to be just like his teacher. In the spiritual realm, that means that disciples of Jesus need to strive to be just like Him. They clearly can never surpass Him, but they must work to grow to be as much like Him as they can possibly be!

The Speck and the Plank

The next parable that Jesus spoke returned to the idea of seeing things clearly, much like the first parable in this series. This time, however, the focus of Jesus' teaching is that of helping others to see clearly. In this parable, Jesus used an example that was extreme to emphasize His point.

To imagine the picture of what Jesus was describing should bring a smile to the face of the reader. He used an utterly ridiculous image to show how ludicrous it was for those who were lacking understanding to try and correct those who also had some misunderstandings.

He spoke of those who would try to remove the speck (a small piece of dust) from their brother's eye, while having a beam (a log, or a board) stuck in his eye. How could someone remove the small speck if they are blinded by the beam in their own eye?

Jesus said those who tried to remove the speck, while keeping their own plank were hypocrites! They needed to take care of their own plank first, then they would be able to see clearly enough to help remove the speck from their brother's eye.

There are many spiritual applications that may be made from this parable of Jesus. It is difficult, because there are no specific explanations given, to pin point exactly what lesson Jesus might have wanted His audience to take away. However, we can certainly explore some of the possibilities, and make some profitable applications.

As this parable has to do with seeing things clearly, it seems that

1 Caldwell, C.G. "Colly", *The Gospel of Luke*. Bowling Green, KY. Guardian of Truth Foundation. 2011

the most likely application that Jesus wanted made would be that there would be times when the students did not clearly see the teaching of the master. Some may miss the meaning a little (the speck) while others may miss it greatly (the beam). Ironically, those who missed it more would be those who were quick to try and correct the others, who may only miss it a bit. They try to set everyone else right, when they are missing the point themselves!

This teaching can easily be applied to the practice of sin as well. This is perhaps the most practical of applications that we can make to Jesus' parable. Those who are guilty of some drastic sin, either in quantity or magnitude, want to correct those who are guilty of something far less severe. They have a beam in their own eye (great sin), but they want to focus on the speck in their brother's eye (some small thing that they have wrong). Such is clearly hypocrisy! Jesus said that there is a need for us to fix our own problem first, and then work to try to help others.

Some misapply this principle to mean that Jesus was teaching that we cannot condemn a sinful practice in the life of another unless we are perfect ourselves. The practical application to that would be that one could never condemn the practice of another! This is contrary to various other biblical passages and principles. In fact, in this very passage, Jesus said that by removing the plank (whatever that might be) would make it possible to see clearly, and help to remove the speck from the eye of another. If Jesus meant that we had to be perfect to help others with their sin, then the last part of this example would be pointless. He would be telling his audience that they could do something that He knew in reality they could not do!

Jesus was condemning hypocrisy here. Those who knew that they had something amiss in their own lives should not be looking for some minuscule problem in the life of a brother, and try to fix it, while leaving their own problem unattended. They should identify their own problem first, and deal with it. Then they could help their brother to resolve their problem. This addresses the idea of attitude! One who is diligent to recognize and deal with their own issues is much better suited to try and help others. They will also be much better received!

The Good and Bad Trees

This fourth parable told by Jesus addressed the kind of fruit that was borne by a tree. He said that good tree does not bear bad fruit, and a bad tree does not bear good fruit. Every type of tree is identified by the fruit that it bears. This is why men do not go to thorns to gather the figs, or to the brambles to gather the grapes.

In this parable, the good and bad trees are two distinct species of plants. One produces a fruit that is suitable for human consumption (the good tree), while the other does not produce a fruit that is edible by men (the bad tree). It is not, as some have presumed, that these are the same type of trees, with one producing good fruit and the other producing something sub-par. The bad tree, in Jesus' example, is not capable of bearing something that is good.

In application, this parable is tied back to the previous one. Jesus tied this parable to the previous one by saying "For a good tree..." That phrase connects His thought here to the previous teaching. He is addressing the nature of the man who would try correct the problems of others. If he is a hypocrite, he cannot possibly bear good fruit. His actions are selfish, and ignorant. His motivation and his attitude are corrupt.

Jesus did provide a bit of explanation for this parable, more so than the previous ones in this series. This explanation also expands the application beyond that of the previous parable's teaching.

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good..." Like the good tree, the good man produces good things, because his heart is good. Jesus' parable is not addressing something outside the control of the man himself. He made the changes, and developed himself into having a "good heart." He is good because he chooses to be good. The good he brings forth is a direct result of the good treasure of his heart!

"An evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil..." The same principle is true of the one who is evil. He produces evil deeds because that is what is found in the "abundance of his heart." This man also chooses to be what he is. No one

makes him evil, or forces him to produce evil deeds. He has corrupted himself, and his actions are the direct result of that which is in his heart.

For both the good man and the evil man, actions are produced from the heart they have developed. And, by their fruits you can know what type of a person they are. Sometimes we hear, after some terrible crime is committed, a parent or friend will say, "They were really a good person!" No, they were not a good person, as a good person would not have committed such a great atrocity! Evil people do evil things. Good people do good things. Whatever is in the heart is made manifest through actions!

This parable should help us to identify the type of person someone is. When we see someone who is wicked, and consistently doing bad things, why would we go to them looking for something good? On the other hand, we might be able to go to someone who has proven themselves to be good, and trust that they will continue to produce good things. We can go to such a one with realistic expectations. Much like a person knows where to go to gather good fruit (figs or grapes) and where to stay away from when looking for good food (thorns and brambles).

