

THE EMMAUS SERIES

8th Sunday Year C

Ecclesiasticus 27:4-7

1 Corinthians 15:54-58

Luke 6:39-45

The fully trained disciple will always be like his teacher

Once more, to appreciate what Luke intends to convey in today's gospel reading, we must hear it as a continuation of the passage we have reflected upon the last two Sundays. The parables of Jesus recalled in this reading are so familiar that they have become proverbial: the blind leading the blind; the splinter in the brother's eye, a tree known by its fruits. Luke wants us to recognise that - as part of the teaching of Jesus - these parables are far more than the expression of homely truths. They certainly do express truths that are applicable to every human situation - continuing the wisdom tradition of old Israel, so wonderfully expressed in the reading from the book of Ecclesiasticus. But the Good News of the Kingdom brought by Jesus (expressed in the teaching to the disciples we have already reflected upon) brings a truth far greater than has ever been expressed before. It is the promise of a new kind of existence, to be found by identifying with the ways of the living God - after the example of the One who is the revelation of the Father.

Luke invites us to find this deeper meaning that these parables had for Jesus. In the light of Jesus' teaching concerning true happiness this deeper meaning is not difficult to grasp. The 'blindness' Jesus warns against, especially for those who are leaders and guides in the community of disciples, is the blindness of those who assume the role of leadership although they have not owned the Saviour as the Light of the world and committed themselves to the new order he has inaugurated with his Law of Love. Disciples who have not made this conversion will see living according to their old ways - placing selfish limits on their practical love for their neighbour - as no more than a tiny 'splinter' obscuring their vision. Such people do not recognise that presenting themselves as disciples of the Lord is kind of 'hypocrisy' - they make this clear by their readiness to point out the more obvious failings of their brothers and sisters. Genuine disciples will be known by their 'fruits': not in clever words or orations but in the witness of the quiet convictions that shape their lives - as, through the gift of Christ's Spirit, the disciple grows 'like his teacher'.

'The good man draws what is good from the store of goodness in his heart'. Again, when related to the central message of the teaching of Jesus, these words are more than wise advice about the conduct of our lives. Jesus is speaking of the hearts of disciples - transformed by their acceptance of the ways of God after the example of Jesus, and putting no selfish limits to the love, or practical good will, they have towards their fellow human beings. The 'examination of conscience' has long been part of the practice of a dedicated Christian life. Today's gospel helps us to find the life-giving measure against which, as the Lord's disciples, we should review our lives. Those who have found the joy of true discipleship will recognise that something of the 'victory' Paul speaks of can already be ours, even in this present life.

John Thornhill sm