

This morning, I'm going to launch begin my sermon with a well-known idiom—I'll begin, but I'd like you to finish the phrase for me out loud. Here we go: *a picture is worth a \_\_\_\_\_*. A picture is worth a thousand words.

This idiom conveys the notion that a picture can communicate a depth of meaning without a long, complex, explanation. I thought I might test this theory out on you as a way of preparing you for the Scripture we're going to read in a moment. Take look at the following picture and tell me what it communicates.

- a blind person leading other blind people; *let's try one more...*
- a house without a foundation

For the last few weeks, we have been exploring Jesus' ministry, His message, and the various ways people responded to Him. The religious authorities labelled Jesus as dangerous because they saw Him deconstructing the worldview that they held dear in favour of something new.

A *worldview*, like the foundation of a house, is vital, but invisible. In general, a worldview provides 3 things: (1) Worldviews provide grid through which we make sense of what we see, hear, and touch; (2) Worldviews provide answers to basic questions that define our existence—who are we? Why are we here? What's wrong with the world? And, what is the solution?; and (3) Worldviews prescribe a pathway for living. What we value and pursue, shapes our living; our life reflects the worldview that we hold.<sup>1</sup>

In our text this morning, Jesus paints four word pictures, and each

one is worth a thousand words; He communicates complex ideas in a way that is compelling and memorable. Throughout these pictures, Jesus uses hyperbole—wild exaggeration—in order to get people thinking and laughing all at the same time. Jesus' final picture packs a punch and demands a response from those who might be content to listen to Him but remain seated on the fence.

At this time I want to invite you to open your Bibles to Luke 6:39-49; if you are using the blue Bible from the seat rack in front of you, you can find out text on page 837.

*“39 He also told them this parable: “Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? 40 The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.*

*41 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 42 How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*

*43 “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. 44 Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briars. 45 A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.*

<sup>1</sup> N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 122-125.

**46** “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?  
**47** As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. **48** They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. **49** But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”

Jesus paints four pictures, each one containing a warning. Jesus is no fool, He knew that His listeners had options—following Him, embracing His Kingdom perspective, was but one option among many. And do you think Jesus didn’t know that many would consider His option to be the worst of them all? Remember, He’s just finished saying that material comfort, the pursuit of pleasure, or applause, will not satisfy—that was enough for many to turn away.

This morning I’m going to walk through each picture and then I’m going to ask you to respond Jesus—His words demand a response. Let’s take a look at picture #1: the blind leading the blind.

### **1. Picture #1: The Blind Leading The Blind**

“Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit?” This picture is worth a thousand words.

**illus:** a few years ago, my family visited the Britannia Mine Museum, and as a part of our tour, we travelled by rail car into the mine. Living where we do, and at the time in history that we do, it is

rare to find oneself in a place completely devoid of light—we have headlights, streetlights, and flashlights, and even in their absence, the moon and the stars provide a significant measure of light.

When we arrived at our destination, in the heart of the mine, our tour guide turned out all the lights. The darkness was so complete that it almost had a physical quality about it; it felt thick. I held my hand an inch away from my face and couldn’t see anything. It is the one and only time in my life that I have ever experienced blindness. I was holding my daughter’s hand when the lights went out, and she began to squeeze with all of her might. My presence was a comfort to her, but she and I were in the same predicament, neither of us could see—I couldn’t have led her out of that mine if our lives depended on it.

In speaking of the blind leading the blind, Jesus offers a warning to the crowd. Many then—and now—claim to know the path to a happy, healthy, life, but the question is: *are they wise and learned leaders or blind guides?*

Now clearly, the Christian worldview is but one among many. The Christian faith helps us to make sense of what we experience in the world. Our faith helps us to answer the basic human questions that we all ask: *who are we? Why are we here? What’s wrong with the world? And, what is the solution?* Following Jesus provides answers to our questions and a path for living.

Of course there are rival explanations of how the world works and what life is all about; some of them sound quite convincing. The rival teachers in Jesus’ day were the Pharisees; in our day, we find ourselves surrounded by rival teachers, with a resounding message that undercuts the Christian worldview.

On any given day, you might hear rival teachers teaching in a high school or university classroom, in a book, around the office water cooler, through the mainstream media, or from the world of advertising: *“There is no God, there’s no moral centre, do what makes you feel good, live how you want, protect your rights, give yourself to your passions—whatever they are, pursue your pleasures—whatever they lead you; you are responsible for your own happiness. You’ve only got one life, so live in the moment, live for today.”*

This message is constant—most of our waking hours are spent breathing it in. This teaching is persuasive—it speaks to our desires: you can live for yourself and have it all! This teaching has shaped us more profoundly than we realize. Think about the proportion of time we spend fixing our attention on Jesus over against the time we spend being inundated with the secular, materialist, pleasure-centred worldview. There is a battle going on for our minds, and many are unaware.

The question we must ask is this: *Can we pursue a path devoid of God and expect to find life?* Implicitly, Jesus is saying that He is the only one worth following, because He is the only one who sees the full picture—by comparison, everyone else is walking blind. You can follow a blind guide if you choose, but be warned, Jesus says, you will end up in a ditch.

Jesus’ second picture continues with the theme of blindness, but it’s not a warning about blind guides, it’s a warning about our own blind spots—let’s take a look.

## 2. Picture #2: Blindspots

*“How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye?”* This is the most comical of Jesus’ images. Perhaps as Jesus was teaching, He picked up two pieces of wood, held them up to His eyes, and said, *“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the 2x4 in your own eye?”*

**illus:** how many of you have ever had an eyelash get stuck in your eye? Even something as small as an eyelash can obscure our vision and cause us pain. If, like me, you rub your eye, trying to dislodge the eyelash, the irritation grows, and your vision becomes more blurry. Unless the eyelash is removed, your sight will be impaired. If a tiny eyelash creates such a problem, how much more difficult if a giant plank were embedded in your eye?

The problem isn’t that we have blindspots, but that we have and still think we can see others with 20-20 vision. At times we do see faults in others, but we tend to have a radar for the faults in others that are present in ourselves. A proud person can easily spot another proud person; a controlling person can easily spot another controlling person; a fearful person can easily spot another fearful person. It takes one to know one.

But our sensitive radar is all-too-often accompanied by a complete lack of self-awareness—the proud person can spot pride in another but is completely unaware that they suffer from the same sickness. We play the fool when we think we see more clearly than we do.

Jesus speaks a word of warning to the crowd and to His rival teachers. Jesus is suggesting that unlike others, He sees things as they truly are. The rival teachers of Jesus’ day had a particular view of

God that was damaging. They spoke of God as being holy and removed—a God who couldn't stomach those who weren't holy. This led them to conclude that people needed to clean themselves up before approaching God. But you can see the problem can't you? When are we clean enough? How could we ever be holy enough?

The Pharisees thought that creating more laws would “up” the holiness factor, but all their laws did was create another barrier between God and people. One author writes, “They were hunting for specks in each other's eyes with magnifying glasses, but couldn't see that there was a plank...in their own.”<sup>2</sup>

These words are still relevant today, but how are we meant to apply them? Many suggest that the best way to apply this word is to adopt a “live and let live” approach to life—you live your life, I'll live mine, and we can all just mind our own business. But it's hard to imagine that this is what Jesus had in mind—this approach has more in common with our own culture of conflict avoidance than it does with kingdom values.

When a parent corrects their child, they are making a judgment of sorts. So too is the person who warns a friend about dangerous choices they are making. When someone in our church begins to wander away from Jesus, are we to say nothing at all? Jesus is saying nothing of the sort.

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<sup>2</sup> N.T. Wright, *Luke For Everyone*, 77.

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 6:1-5.

Life with God requires us to discern the good from the bad, and the right from the wrong. But we confuse the matter when stand in God's place and tell someone that their failure is fatal, that they are beyond hope, beyond restoration, and beyond the grace of God. Jesus doesn't tell us to “mind our own business,” instead, He invites us deal with our own faults (blindspots) so that we will be better able to help others with theirs.<sup>3</sup> *The one who condemns is blind—both to their own faults, and to the forgiveness God has given them.*

Let's take a look at picture #3: grapes from a briar patch.

### 3. Picture #3: Grapes From A Briar Patch?

*“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. 44 Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briars.”*

Jesus draws upon a metaphor that was well-known in the ancient world; the notion of fruitfulness was often used to describe a person's life. For example, Psalm 1:1-3 says, *“Blessed in the one...whose delight is in the law of the Lord...That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season”*.

Jesus tells us that, *“Each tree is recognized by its own fruit.”* Joel Green writes, “In Luke's (pre-Freudian) world, a person's ‘insides’ [was not] accessible...through his or her psychology but

through his or her social interactions. People, like trees, are known for what they produce.”<sup>4</sup>

It makes sense right? A cherry tree produces cherries, a peach tree peaches, vines produce grapes, and briar patches produce thorns. We are meant to connect the dots—what were the rival teachers producing? What was the fruit of their teaching? What are we producing in our own lives—grapes or thorns, good or evil?

Character and integrity aren’t private virtues, they are very much public. You can tell a lot about a teacher or leader by the words they speak and the lives they lead. We can and should ask the question, does their speech and action warrant following?

**illus:** By a show of hands, how many of you have seen the Disney/Pixar movie entitled, *Inside Out*? The setting for this movie is inside the mind of Riley, a young, preteen girl. Inside Riley’s mind, we meet five personified emotions—Joy, Sadness, Fear, Anger, and Disgust; we are given an inside look as these characters try to guide Riley as she and her parents make a new life for themselves in a brand new city. The movie goes back and forth between what is happening inside Riley, and how she responds on the outside.

It’s quite a profound movie, and I commend it to you, but the point I’m trying to make here is that what’s inside always comes out. Jesus said, “*For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.*” Our words reveal what’s in our heart. Our actions reveal what’s in our heart. Our pursuits reveal what’s in our heart—what’s inside will come out.

*So, what’s inside you? How’s your heart?*

We need to keep in mind that we are all lacking in the integrity department—all of us know more truth than we live. But are our lives producing the fruit of obedience? *Are we orienting our lives—however imperfectly—around Jesus and His kingdom?*

It’s time now for the final picture, a building without a foundation.

#### **4. Picture #4: Building Without a Foundation**

*“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? 47 As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. 48 They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, **the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.** 49 But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”*

Jesus paints a vivid picture, outlining the consequences of ignoring His words. Listening to His words without committing to them is compared to building a house without a foundation.

One thing’s for certain, Jesus wouldn’t have made it in politics. He didn’t play to the crowd, instead, He drew a line in the sand and invited people to make a decision. Perhaps you’re just beginning to explore who Jesus is, and what it means to follow Him—you may

<sup>4</sup> Joel B. Green, *The New International Commentary On The New Testament: The Gospel Of Luke*, 277.

need more time before you make a decision—but sooner or later we're all confronted with the line Jesus has drawn. "*Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?*"

**illus:** As a pastor my schedule is somewhat fluid—I work days, nights, and weekends—but most weeks I take Fridays off. With both my kids at school, Friday is often a day for Naomi and I to spend together. Sometimes our Friday is filled with fun and adventure and other times we work around the house or go grocery shopping. When we are shopping, one of our favourite stops is Costco.

Every time I go to Costco I can't help but observe the taste test lines. People have clearly figured out that if you go to Costco close to lunch time, you can eat for free—I can see that some of you not only know this strategy, but employ it!

It's interesting to see people go from one sampling table to another, and then go back repeatedly to the one they liked best. Many of these repeat "customers" fill their stomachs but then walk away without buying the product. This past week I've been thinking about the similarities between these repeat customers and would-be-followers of Jesus. How often do we to Jesus, picking and choosing what we like? How often do we fill up on what we need from Him, but then walk away without making a commitment?

Have you all heard of the term F.O.M.O? It stands for the Fear Of Missing Out. This term is being applied to our younger generations but the effects are much more widespread. Many of us are afraid to commit to anything, or anyone, because something or someone, better might come along. The basic principle is: *Don't commit, keep your options open, or you might be disappointed by your decision.*

But living this way guarantees disappointment. The inability to commit means that one misses out, constantly, on things that are good and life-giving. I see this fear when it comes to whole-heartedly following Jesus. People come close, but not too close; they surrender to Jesus, but they hold a part of themselves back.

I wonder, how often do we underestimate Jesus' expertise when it comes to the living of our lives? How often do we assume that we know better than Him? That we see more than Him? That we understand the consequences better than Him? Jesus' voice calls out across the centuries—to me, to you, to the world—and He speaks the words, "*Follow Me.*"

**Conclusion:** Do you want a life that is unshakeable? Jesus tells us that His words, His life, is like a rock—solid enough to build a life upon. It's a bold claim, isn't it? Either Jesus is a liar, or, He thought Himself capable of doing what only God can do.

1 Samuel 2:2 says, "*There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no **Rock** like our God.*" 2 Samuel 22:2-3 says, "*The Lord is my **rock**, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my **rock**, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my saviour.*" Psalm 40:2 says, "*He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a **rock** and gave me a firm place to stand.*"

Hitting rock bottom can be a good thing, if it forces us to look up and admit that life isn't working out the way we thought. We all need a firm place on which to stand—Jesus claims to be the only firm foundation for life.

Life is filled with choices, big and small. Life is filled with the consequences of our choices, big and small. *There is no bigger choice than this—how will you respond to Jesus and His words?*

Perhaps today is the day, for the first time, that you make a commitment and decide to follow Jesus. Perhaps you made that decision a long time ago, but you've wandered away, or, slowly pushed Jesus to the margins of your life—make today the day that you recommit to fixing your eyes on Jesus and following where He leads.

### **Response Song**

### **Prayer**

### **Benediction**