

Matthew 7:1-5, 7-10

Jesus said, 'Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, "Let me take the speck out of your eye", while the plank is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye.

'Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? 11If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Healing & Wholeness 2: Stuck on the Specks

What is your mood today? I have this little app on my phone from my health care provider. Each day it wants me to track my diet, exercise, the hours I sleep...and my mood. I wonder if anyone is monitoring my responses. Is there someone sitting at a computer saying, "Oh I see Mr. Schaeffer only got 6 hours sleep last night; he needs more than that," or "Mr. Schaeffer needs to quit that late night snacking; he's gonna get fat." And if they're monitoring my mood, what would they do if I each day I picked the opposite mood of the one I picked the previous day. Would someone call me and ask if everything was alright? Or is this tracking of my diet, exercise, sleeping habits, and mood something to help me reflect on my own mood and behavior? Probably.

And I have been reflecting on it. I used to just select the big smiley face because that's what I wanted to be – that's the image I wanted to project in public. But over time I've become more honest with myself and I often select a less-smiley face. There's a cute movie that I hope you watch sometime called "The Lego Movie." At the beginning it depicts this ideal Lego world and all the Lego people in one big happy community, and the top pop music song is titled, "Everything Is Awesome!"

The truth is that NOT everything is awesome. We have our good days, and we have our bad ones. Last week we talked about wounds that don't heal, wounds left by the people we've loved and lost. We may have days when "everything is awesome," but even our brightest moods can be dampened by painful memory of loss...which is why our faith is so important; Jesus reminds us and his resurrection confirms for us that the separation that we endure is temporary, that one day the clouds will all be gone, as will the tears and the sorrow. Death itself will be gone. There will be cloudy days when everything is not awesome, but we always keep our eyes fixed on that day when Christ will reign, when we are reunited with our loved ones, and we our joy will no longer be tempered by the sadness we feel here and now.

But there are things beside the loss of those we love that can rob us of joy. Today I want to talk to you about 'logs' or 'planks.' Jesus asks, "Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eyes and not see the log in your own eye?" Jesus was a carpenter, so he likely dealt with a few logs, and he probably got a few specks in his eyes as he would be cutting those logs, and you know how annoying they can be when you have to stop what you're doing, look down, blink repeatedly, or splash water in it to clean it out. A plank on the other hand would be a serious problem. It sounds absurd, but Jesus liked to exaggerate to make a point; if a speck in your eye obscures your vision, a plank in the eye results in total blindness, and how can a blind person even see a speck in someone else's eye? You actually have no right to even mention a speck in someone's eye when you have a plank sticking out of your eye. And to speak to someone about their speck is nothing but hypocrisy. That's what Jesus calls it.

And DO YOU KNOW WHY WE'RE SO GOOD AT SEEING THE FAULTS IN OTHERS? BECAUSE WE SPEND ALL OUR TIME LOOKING FOR THE SPECKS IN OTHERS' EYES RATHER THAN SPENDING A LITTLE TIME LOOKING FOR THE LOGS IN OUR OWN EYES. AND THAT MAKES US HYPOCRITES. And just me saying that word stings a little bit; I don't like to call anyone a hypocrite because I know how that word stings. Jesus had no problem saying it, though I'm sure it stung a lot of people, because we don't like to see the logs in our eyes. We'd rather focus on the speck in someone else's eye.

We're in this series on healing and wholeness, and we have to confess that we can only heal and be made whole seeing the log in our eye. Part of the reason our skies get so dark and cloudy so much of the time is that we see all the horrible things going on in the world, and we shake our heads and say, "There are some really bad people out there." And we can talk about those bad people until kingdom come. But until we start paying attention to the log in our own eyes, the skies will be darkened. And I don't think we have the power within us to turn our gaze inward to and see that log. Which is why we must seek God. Part of the reason our skies look so cloudy is because the clouds themselves are in our own eyes, and those clouds can be removed by God. Jesus beckons us at the end of this passage. "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened." If we sincerely want to clear those logs from our eyes, all we need to do is earnestly ask God to do so. God doesn't want us to be stumbling around in the dark. God wants us to have clear vision, and when we have clear vision we can start following Jesus without stumbling so much. That's where we'll start next week; choosing to follow Jesus. Taking the big step.

When the urge to love overcomes the need to judge – Gene Robinson