

IV Trinity 2026

Sermon - Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

Romans 8.18-23 St. Luke 6.36-42

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We have all heard the expression “what goes around comes around”... stating the consequences of our actions...whether good or bad...will eventually return to affect us. Although the saying is usually applied in a secular way...it has its roots in today’s Gospel.

Jesus tells us not to judge others and God will not judge us; not to condemn others and God will not condemn us; to forgive others, and God will forgive us. Give to others and God will give to us. He then goes on to say we will all received a full measure, a generous helping, poured into our hands—all that we can hold. The measure we use for others is the one that God will use for us. What does Jesus mean by “the measure”?

In the agrarian society of the First Century...people who bought and sold grain would have understood what Jesus was saying referred to the way grain was measured by an honest seller...poured into a basket, shaken and pressed down, over and over again...until the basket overflowed. He would then pour the contents into the buyer’s lap, who would fold his outer garment like a pocket and carry his grain home.

Jesus really isn’t talking about fair business practices, although his teaching could make a seller nervous if he was dishonest and cheated customers by selling them less grain than what they paid for...by not measuring the grain accurately. The “measure” Jesus is talking about is the disposition of our hearts toward compassion, mercy, love and forgiveness. Three short parables follow.

In the first parable...Jesus says a blind man cannot safely lead another blind person...they will both fall into a ditch. Let’s suppose a visually challenged person was leading a group of equally visually challenged people on a narrow path overlooking the Gand Canyon. Miss a step...and there is a 1000 foot drop to the floor of the canyon and certain death. No blind person would attempt such a thing. He would need a sighted person.

In the second parable...Jesus says a student isn’t greater (smarter) than his teacher. But one day...if he completes and passes all of his courses...he would be like (not greater than) his teacher. Let’s suppose

a friend who has never driven a car before in his life, offers to teach you how to drive. He says he's read the handbook...and thinks he knows everything there is to know about driving a car. Would you accept his offer to teach you how to drive? Only a drivers-ed instructor with years of experience can teach a new driver how to be a good driver.

In the third parable...Jesus asks why someone would worry about the tiny speck of dust in another person's eye, when he pays no attention to a forest of redwood trees in his own eye. He would be arrogant and presumptuous to offer to remove the speck of dust from the another person's eye without clearing the logs and debris out of his own eye. He would have to see clearly before trying to help the other person.

All three parables make the same point. We don't want to be so caught up in ourselves we become spiritually blind. We are then in no position to help others navigate their way out of their own spiritual blindness. We don't want to think we are so firm in our faith we are better than everyone else...even better than others in the Church. We pray, we teach and we learn...so we can help others in their journey through life with Christ. We don't want to try to help anyone with a spiritual "speck" keeping them from seeing clearly...unless we first deal with the "logs" that are obstacles in our own lives.

We are all called to show the kind of mercy (the measure) toward others God shows (his measure) toward us. We get ourselves into trouble when we are overly harsh and petty in judging others. We get ourselves into more trouble when we find fault in what someone else is doing, especially when we choose to ignore the same or greater fault in ourselves.

The Gospel does not tell us to ignore bad behavior. We have a responsibility to judge bad behavior in other people as long as we do so in the same way God does...with humility, love, compassion, and mercy. God sees us the way we really are. We need to try to see ourselves...including our faults... the way we really are. That means admitting we have faults and asking God to forgive us.

The measure (standard) we use to judge others is the same measure (standard) God will use to judge us. Let's make sure our standard is full of grace, love, compassion, mercy and forgiveness. Only then are we in a position to help others.