

Welcome to this installment of our series exploring the portrayal of a Radical Jesus the gospel of Luke. Let's open by praying together:

Loving God, thank you that we are able to spend this time in your presence today. We pray that you would speak to us and challenge us, and that we would know your love for us afresh. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Psalm 139:1-18

You have searched me, Lord,
and you know me.

**You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.**

You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.

**Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, know it completely.**

You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.

**Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.**

Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?

**If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.**

If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,

**even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.**

If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"

**even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.**

For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

**I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.**

My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

**Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.**

How precious to me are your thoughts, God!
How vast is the sum of them!

**Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.**

We're going to sing/read/listen to our first song "Lord of all hopefulness" .
[Click here to listen on Youtube](#)

Thanksgiving:

Gracious Father, thank you for this day. Thank you that you love us unconditionally, so much that you gave your only Son for us . Thank you for the gifts, large and small, that you give us every day. Thank you for small acts of kindness; for our food and clothes and heating; for nature and the beauty of the place where we live. We think now of other things you have given us this week...

As we have received, may we also give generously, whether we are giving our time or our money. (If you normally put money in the bag please take a moment to set it aside). Thinking of these things, let us pray:

Generous God, we know that all good things come from you. We pray that you would bless the money we collect as a church, and that you would help us to use it well for the Church and our wider community. In Jesus' name, Amen

Reading:

Luke 6:37-49

37 “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

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 thornbushes, 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.

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.”

Reflection:

One of the funniest things my Mum and I have found about doing these facebook services is seeing the recording afterwards. Many of you have probably experienced the strangeness of hearing your own voice played back to you! Even looking in the mirror isn't what it seems - with our image flipped back at us, we never truly see ourselves as others see us. The first key idea in this passage in Luke of hypocrisy and judging others can also be seen as the difference between how we see ourselves and how others and God see us.

I think this disconnect is a part of being human - we often forget that how the world and our own selves look depends on your point of view. It also works in both directions. With the metaphor of a plank this passage is reminding us

that we may not be able to see our flaws and things we do wrong, but often we also think we are worse than we are and are overly critical of ourselves.

In our world at the moment there's quite an atmosphere of judgment: judgment of decision makers, and judgment of the choices people are making when coronavirus is around. In light of this passage, we can ask ourselves as individuals and as a church community how we can avoid falling into judgment, and instead promote love and empathy for others.

Therefore we need to rely on God and ask him to show us how to look at ourselves and others through his eyes. And we need to remember that when he sees us, and when he sees the person we dislike the most or feel most different from, he says 'You are fearfully and wonderfully made', and that he loves us.

We all have planks in our eyes: we can pray this week that God shows them to us, so that we can see the world around us more clearly and with his eyes - in all its beauty and brokenness.

The second mismatch Jesus talks about in this passage is between our thoughts and words, and our actions. Both as individuals, and often as a Church, we say we believe one thing, but then what we do doesn't really align with that. But Jesus' picture for us is of a house with its foundation built on rock, if we both hear his words and put them into practice.

But again like with self image, this is something we can only do by relying on God. He gives us a 'good measure' and more than what we need, so that 'good is stored up' in our hearts and we are able to live a life closer to what Jesus teaches us. If we rely on God and have a closer relationship with him, it will become easier to not judge; to not condemn; to forgive, and to give. God gives us the strength and energy we need, and as we use them he will replenish them endlessly. These things aren't about us striving or battling - God has already given us all that we need.

So I pray this week that when you face hard days or hard decisions, you would know God filling you up with strength and love, and you would see yourself in the way he sees you even more clearly.

Let us pray together in reflection:

**Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.**

(Psalm 139:23-24)

Questions:

- 1) How do you think the disciples would have responded to what Jesus taught them?
- 2) Reflecting on our own lives, how can we avoid judging ourselves and see ourselves as God sees us?
- 3) How can we as a church actively love and show empathy instead of judgment?

We are going to sing/read/listen to “Christ be in my waking” [Click here to find the song on YouTube.](#)

Prayers:

Let's pause for a moment and be still in God's presence.

Here are some pictures to help us think and pray about the world around us...



Let us finish our time of prayer by sharing the Lord's prayer: **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.**

To finish let us sing/read/listen to “My hope is built” [Click here to find the song.](#)

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore, Amen