Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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“Remove the beam from your own eye first (Luke 6:42).

1 Tim 1:1-2, 12-14; Luke 6:39-42

One lesson from my childhood was that it’s hard to get a speck out of your own eye. You get your face as close as you can to the bathroom mirror and try to get it out, but only succeed in getting whatever it is — and it always feels huge — further under the lid.

My mother would make me sit still at the kitchen table. Using a cardboard match, she would roll the eyelid back, then dab the tip of a rolled tissue to capture the foreign object. This was vastly preferable to my dad, if he was home, taking charge and spreading tools out on the table like he was running a field hospital. When he was done messing around and scaring me half to death, my mother would intervene and get the speck out with the same method her mother had used when she was a girl.

Jesus used a short parable about a speck in the eye to help people help each other recover their sight. Our smallest faults, the ones too close for us to notice, are the ones that blind us in dealing with others, whose faults are always so obvious, glaring and irritating. It takes someone close to us to help us overcome the little blind spots that distort our vision and keep us from being more patient and empathetic to the

common self-centeredness that affects us all.

Jesus used this wonderful parable to remind those who were always judging others that it takes one to know one. Deal first with your own faults and then you can help others. And in the meantime, accept the human condition you share with everyone. It makes each day an exercise in forgiveness and asking to be forgiven. Love grows in that household where the willingness to help is stronger than the need to criticize others for being just like us.

This parable has a lot to say about people today talking past each other at school board meetings, other public forums and then online, where ideological differences have made us deaf and blind over Covid rules, public statues and memorials, history and religion. We all suffer from too much subjectivity, self-righteousness and impatience to listen and try to find common ground. Social media has accelerated our need to find intellectual safe havens and comfort zones where we won't have to deal with anyone who disagrees with us. Maybe a field hospital is needed.

Adapted from 2013

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