

Sermon on Sunday 23 June 2024, 8.00am Holy Communion by Rev. Bill Church

Mote and Beam

Among my disorganised collection of CDs is one called "The Plank".

It is a short film starring Eric Sykes and Tommy Cooper, with hardly any dialogue and a lot of mime.

It tells the story of two men trying to get a long plank from the builder's yard to their work site, and of their misadventures and mishaps in the process.

They have to do a bit of first aid but no eye surgery.

It is very funny, and I laugh out loud every time I watch it. As, I guess, Jesus' first hearers laughed out loud at the idea of a man with a great plank in his eye trying to get a speck of dust out of someone else's eye.

"You hypocrite," accuses Jesus, calling out the all too common case of somebody with all too many moral faults who denounces another person with less grievous faults.

"Let him who is without sin cast the first stone," as Jesus said on another occasion.

And that is a salutary warning to the fault finders and Mrs Grundys of every generation.

As with so many of Jesus' parables, however, it could also be read another way.

If you assume that the character with the beam in his eye is actually trying to help the man with the speck of dust in his eye, then the point is that the would-be helper is not effective because of a burden or impediment he is himself suffering.

If he takes the beam out of his eye, he can then be an effective helper.

Help, aid, charity, consolation - all need love and care and sympathy; but all also need the helper to be resilient and wisely prepared.

And when you are faced with that irritating bit of dust in your eye, someone else with clear vision and a steady hand can be a Godsend.

Pray for that help when you need it.

And pray that you may be an effective helper for others in need.