



One rule for one...

I suppose it's old fashioned hypocrisy, but there's a pattern of recent times, which seems particularly acute right now.

Take our former prime minister David Cameron.

The first thing he did as Conservative leader was to go on a trip to the Arctic with huskies to check out climate change. He wanted to shift the perception that the Conservatives didn't care about the environment: this was important.

But last month we found out, that out of the glare of being Prime Minister, he has been freely using private jets for domestic tourism. As Angela Rayner put it, in a lethal question before the select committee two weeks ago: 'How many times have you used Grensill's private jet to go to your third home in Cornwall?'

Cameron didn't know. But crucially, any use of the private jet, chalking up utterly unnecessary flight emissions, demonstrates he never really thought that *he* needed to make any sacrifices, to help with climate change. That was for others.

Dominic Cummings was passionate about the need to go into Lockdown. He now argues that we should have gone into Lockdown earlier than we did last March, but he still doesn't seem to think that his own travelling to Barnard Castle was breaking the rules of last April's lockdown. The rule for others was important, but he didn't think it applied to him.

Professor Neil Ferguson was (and is!) a big proponent of Lockdown, but last year when it came to meeting up with his girlfriend, who happened to be another person's wife, the Lockdown didn't need to apply to him.

There is a sense that these individuals *are* able to see the bigger picture, but they aren't able to include themselves in the bigger picture, for they believe themselves to be particularly brilliant people, who can point out to others what they ought to be doing, but don't need to follow those rules for themselves.

There's Jesus' famous story about the Pharisee and the tax collector. The Pharisee proclaims that he is glad that he is not like these other people, for he fasts twice a week and gives a tenth of his income to the Temple. Jesus contrasts him unfavourably with a tax collector, who just acknowledges his own sin, and prays with humility.

But in our modern situation, the case is even worse. The Pharisee may have been unbearably arrogant about it, but at least he *did* give a tenth of his money to the Temple and he *did* fast twice a week. Cameron, Cummings and Ferguson's sin is not that they are arrogant about their own righteousness; it's just that they haven't been righteous in the first place, and yet they've still told everyone else what to do!!

In that sense, we are at a new level of arrogance.