

LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL



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**TWENTY SIXTH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

25th September 2022

Luke 16:19 Jesus said to the Pharisees: “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰ And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹ who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. ²² The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴ He called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.’ ²⁵ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. ²⁶ Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’ ²⁷ He said, ‘Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house— ²⁸ for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.’ ²⁹ Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’ ³⁰ He said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ ³¹ He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

This parable is the highpoint of the teaching on wealth in chapters 15 and 16. The story is found only in Luke.

Verse 20 The contrast could hardly be sharper. Lazarus is named and, as a result, is more personally real to the reader. In Luke, “poor” already means someone open to God.

Verse 22 Both died, but one was “carried by angels” and the other “was buried”. A blunt contrast of destinies indeed!

Verse 23 Hades is used not to mean what we would call hell but rather the intermediate abode of the dead before final judgement.

Thought for the day

Irony and sarcasm somewhat resemble each other, with some notable differences. Sarcasm, easily enough achieved, is often wounding. On the other hand, irony, using “cognitive dissonance”, prompts insight and triggers memories. There is a good example in today’s Gospel: “if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.” Will they really? By the time of writing, Jesus himself had already risen—and still conversion was as remote as ever. With all our convictions and doctrines, what is holding us back?

KIERAN O'MAHONY OSA - www.tarsus.ie

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. The first of the faults attributed to the rich man is his insensitivity to the abject poverty of those around him. When have you discovered that it is when you are aware of the needs of those around you and seek to make some response that you bring out the best in yourself?
2. The second fault attributed to the rich man is the way he ignored the word of God coming through Moses and the prophets. How have the gospels, the scriptures or your faith opened you up to a deeper and more satisfying perspective on life?
3. Some people look to the spectacular for a sign of God’s presence and action. For Jesus the lessons we need are not to be sought in the spectacular, but in the ordinary things of everyday life. Where have you found reminders of God’s presence in the world around you?
4. “An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal – always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it.... All Christians, their pastors included, are called to show concern for the building of a better world.” (Pope Francis: THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL, No. 183)

JOHN BYRNE OSA - *Intercom*

The point of the story is not to promote the idea of 'pie in the sky when you die'. It is rather an attack on the greed and selfishness in a world of plenty that leaves the poor excluded. If this was a problem in biblical times, it pales into insignificance when we consider today's world and the scale of the misery experienced by so many. The parable retains all its force; the difference is Jesus did come back from the dead and not just to tell us about heaven but about the poor people at the gate. Are we listening?

SEAN GOAN - *Let the Reader Understand, Year C*

This Sunday's passage is entirely taken up with one parable. It is in three sections – each one is a story in itself, so you can remain with any one of them:

- verses 19 to 22: an introductory scene ending with the death of both Lazarus and the rich man;
- verses 23 to 26: a first dialogue between the rich man and Abraham;
- verses 27 to 31: a second dialogue between them.

We are accustomed to moralizing stories, in which the point of the story is to exhort us to imitate the hero or heroine. A parable is not meant to work like that. Its method is to evoke a personal response to the story: what a surprise that was! or, what an unexpected ending! Then it says to us: remember an experience like that and you will know what happens when God comes into people's lives.

As in every story, you must find yourself identifying with one of the characters; for example, in this parable there are three characters – the rich man, Lazarus, and Abraham.

A reminder for this parable: all Bible meditation must start from experience. Therefore do not read this parable first of all as something that happened in the next life, because you have no experience of that. The parable may well lead you to conclude something about the next life, but you mustn't start there.

Scripture Reflection

"We must build a world where freedom is not an empty word and where the poor man Lazarus can sit down at the same table with the rich man."

Pope Paul VI

Lord, when we look around at the world today, what do we see?

Rich nations dressed in purple and fine linen, feasting magnificently every day,

while at their very gates lie poor nations,

covered with sores and longing to fill themselves with scraps from the tables of the rich,

dogs even come and lick their sores.

Lord, we pray that your Church may continue to call the world

to repentance as Jesus did.

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL - *Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospels*

In this parable, using images that everyone in his day easily understood, Jesus reminds everyone that God has the last word over rich and poor.

The rich man is not considered an exploiter. Quite simply he enjoyed his riches and ignored a poor man. He lay at his doorstep. but he did not meet him. He excluded him from his life. His sin was a sin of indifference.

Sociologists tell us that apathy and lack of sensitivity toward the suffering of others is growing in society. In a thousand ways we avoid noticing the way people suffer. Little by little we become incapable of seeing their plight.

The sight of a beggar on our way annoys us. It disturbs us to meet a friend suffering from a terminal disease.

We don't know what to do or say. It is better to stay away; get back to our business; keep from being touched by it.

It is much easier to cope with suffering that takes place far away from us. Statistics analyse the reality but rarely touch our hearts. We know how to watch horrible suffering on the television, but the screen is always unreal and less terrifying. When grief or pain affects someone close to us, we try in a thousand ways to deaden our feelings.

Those who follow Jesus become more sensitive to the sorrow of any they come across. They go to meet a person in need, and if they can, they try to ease that person's situation.

JOSÉ A PAGOLA - *Following in the Footsteps of Christ, Year C*

In Luke's Gospel there is an emphasis on **seeing** the poor and the oppressed. The rich man in today's gospel does not see Lazarus. God's economic plan means striving for a world where the poor man Lazarus can sit down at the same table as the rich man, and where we listen to the cry of the poor.

It is an injustice today that those who have done the least to cause climate change are on the frontline of the crisis. When we hear the scientific data, we easily become detached. When we hear real stories, however, and see the devastation and grief of families, we can be moved by compassion to act.

Sharing the stories of people who are on the frontlines of the environmental crisis is so important. How can your community hear these voices more clearly?

TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLETT – Go Deeper