

“Lord Give Me Your Eyes”

26th Sunday of Ordinary Time [C]

Am 6:1a, 4-7; Ps 146:7-10; 1 Tim 6:11-16; 2 Cor 8:9; Lk 16:19-31

These are some particularly compelling Scripture readings today

- and they continue the theme of Stewardship from last week’s readings.

In our first reading, the prophet Amos is speaking to the rich elites of Israel’s Northern Kingdom:

- They were living lavish lifestyles:
 - stretched out on couches, enjoying the finest foods, wines, & music
- This ultra-comfortable lifestyle may not seem so evil on the surface,
 - but they were living this extravagant life
 - while ignoring the great sufferings
 - of the multitudes around them.
 - Therefore, Amos correctly foretold,
 - they would be the very first of the kingdoms to go into exile.

Then, in our Gospel, Jesus, with rather graphic contrast, speaks of two men:

- A rich man, whose life might best be summed up
 - with just three words from the reading:
 - *“he feasted magnificently...”*
 - But much like the Northern Kingdom of old,
 - while living the high life, he repeatedly ignored the poor man:
 - Lazarus, who lay right at his doorstep
 - Lazarus, who would’ve loved to eat even the food scraps
 - that might fall from the table...
 - Lazarus, who far from wearing the rich man’s fine purple linens
 - was instead clothed in sores.
- But after their deaths, Jesus reveals a great irony:
 - The rich man was tormented in hell –
 - *“longing for even a drop of water on his tongue”*
 - much as Lazarus had longed for food at his doorstep.
 - Lazarus on the other hand, basked in the everlasting comfort of heaven

- much as the rich man had reveled in the *temporary* comforts of earth...
- Ultimately we realize, perhaps unexpectedly,
 - that all along it was the “rich man” who was *truly* impoverished
 - while Lazarus was the truly *rich* one...

So why did Lazarus go to heaven and the rich man go to hell?

- And what does this mean for us?

First things first, it’s important for us to know that:

- the rich man’s great wealth and Lazarus’ extreme poverty
 - had absolutely no bearing on their eternal destinations.
- Our wealth (or lack thereof) is in itself morally neutral. (CCC 1723, 2552)
- There are plenty of good & bad people, rich & poor alike.

And truly -- regardless of bank accounts – no one is worthy of heaven.

- “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom 3:23)
 - There is nothing we could ever do to deserve or earn heaven.
 - We owe our potential admission
 - to God’s amazing grace
 - and to our faith in Jesus (Eph 2:8-9)
 - and yet, as St. James so pointedly wrote,
 - that “faith, without works, is *dead*...” (Jas 2:17)

So while wealth is indeed morally *neutral* – it is definitely not *irrelevant*...

- What we do with our wealth is of critical importance.
- Scripture tells us “the love of money is the root of all evil...” (1 Tim 6:10)
 - We know that, but boy is it hard
 - not to love our money (!)
 - And so we begin to see what a dangerous trap wealth can be...

Recall how Jesus cautioned that

- it is “*easier for a camel to pass thru the eye of a needle*
 - *than for a rich man to get to heaven*” (Mt 19:24; Mk 10:25; Lk 18:25)

(Ouch! Those are not good odds!)

But why? What does God have against wealth?

- Well, absolutely nothing (as we just discussed).
- But the problem is we get so comfortable, so lacking in physical need,
 - so self-sufficient ...
 - that we can be less likely to reach out to God...
 - we become blind to our spiritual poverty...
 - We can easily become greedy and selfish
 - We don't want to share what WE earned (vice what God gave us).
 - We love OUR lifestyles, we love OUR money,
 - forgetting we are called to be vessels of God's graces,
 - not hoarders of them.
 - Just like a gardener filling a watering can:
 - who does so, not for the benefit of the can
 - but for the purpose of watering the plants...
 - If the holes of the watering can become stubbornly clogged,
 - well, it's useless and you throw it away...
 - Likewise, when we stubbornly hold onto
 - the gifts God has poured into us,
 - we are being equally useless vessels
 - and risk the fate of the rich man in Jesus' parable...

You see, God seeks to answer the urgent prayers of the Lazaruses of the world thru others,

- thus fostering Lazarus' humility and his faith in God.

God also seeks to grow the humble obedience and detachment of the rich man

- putting a Lazarus at his very doorstep,
- to every day compel the rich man to not cling to his gifts,
 - but to recognize he is called to be a vessel of God's good will toward Lazarus

In this way we begin to see a beautiful, symbiotic relationship

- between God and the rich man and Lazarus,
 - mutually beneficial, and eternally rewarding...
- It's that easy – and yet it's that hard:
 - We get so caught up in our physical state we overlook our spiritual state...

So what was the rich man's sin?? Simply, he did not see Lazarus.

- Oh, he no doubt physically saw Lazarus every day;
 - and yet, he was blind to him, spiritually blind.
- A quick aside: This story reminds me
 - of a contemporary Christian song by Brandon Heath
 - that came out about 7 years ago.
 - It's called "Give Me Your Eyes" and is a prayer asking for God's eyes,
 - so that in the hustle & bustle of life
 - he wouldn't be overlooking people in need.
 - It's a nice message if you want to look it up:
 - "Give Me Your Eyes" by Brandon Heath.

At any the rich man, too consumed with himself or other things

- failed to provide any aid to Lazarus.
- The Church calls this "Sins of Omission"
 - The rich man in today's parable was ultimately judged
 - not so much for what he did,
 - but critically on what he did not do.
 - This is a reminder to us, when we do an Examination of Conscience
 - before enjoying the Sacrament of Reconciliation,
 - we should give due consideration to sins of omission...

II. So what are we to do with this?

- First, take an honest look at your life and determine what gifts you have.
- Then, look for the Lazaruses in your life.

We all have gifts.

- You may not feel like you have anything to give,
 - but truly we all have gifts of some sort.
 - Even Lazarus in today's parable, at a minimum ostensibly had the gifts of
 - humility, perseverance, faith, and hope in God.
 - Those can absolutely be shared with others.

- The Church often refers to our gifts as: Time, Talent, Treasure.

In the busyness of our daily lives, we come to see Time as a very precious commodity.

- So often, Satan seeks to rob us of time,
- seeking to fill our every hour so we have no time to give back to God.
- This calls for our awareness, wisdom, and simply making time a priority.

- If you can give even one or two hours a month, great work can be done!

Talent: there are many, many different gifts we might have.

- Scripture outlines our potential spiritual gifts.
- We have helpful skills we have learned from our occupations or thru life’s experiences.
- And many of us are simply blessed with natural abilities.
- Share these talents! Don’t let false humility or the busyness of life
 - cause you to keep your gifts to yourself!

Treasure: these are our physical assets such as money and property.

- This is what the rich man of today’s parable had
- and we see how it can often be the most difficult for us to share...

Then, after we recognize our gifts: next we simply strive

- to keep our spiritual eyes & ears open
- so we don’t miss the Lazaruses that God places
 - in the doorways of our lives.

I conclude with a quote from Erma Bombeck

- a famous newspaper columnist from the 1960’s into the 90’s. She once said:
 - *When I stand before God at the end of my life,*
 - *I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left,*
 - *and could say, 'I used everything you gave me'.*

Today we are called to examine our lives, to recognize our gifts, and to become true vessels of God’s grace. I pray on this Commitment Sunday you’ll pledge to share those gifts.

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