

Blessed Trinity Catholic Community † Spirit of Christ Mission
Twenty-Sixth Sunday Ordinary time ~C~ September 28, 2025

Amos 6:1a, 4-7; Psalm 146: 7 8-9, 9-10; 1 Timothy 6:11-16; Luke 16:19-31

Homily ~ Fr. Ed Hislop



The image is striking, isn't it? A poor man, sick, covered with sores, hungry, ignored, lying at the door of a rich man whose life had been filled with "what was good."

Who is Lazarus? Could he be every person who is alone, afraid, ignored, uncared for; every person longing to hear the good news of a hearty welcome, the hungry on the streets or those starving for acceptance and welcome? All of whom have names, a history, a family somewhere.

Who is the rich man? Could he be those unable to see the other, because they are so caught up in their own concerns, thoughts, or passions?

Or too forgetful of all the good they had received? Is this "rich man" the one or even the many who have become complacent, comfortable, and forgetful of the bond they have with all others, and the responsibility they bear to share their grief and pain, their joy and hope? Is this "rich man" those who have become too casual or absent minded, when it comes to sharing what they have with those outside the door or grasp tightly to what they claim belongs only to them?

The story of the sick, hungry Lazarus and the rich man "dining sumptuously each day," is a story which goes to the very heart of who we are and who we wish to be. Caring for others, with every possible resource, because we remember that we received what was good. That is the Gospel—the way of life and mission to which we commit ourselves. The truth to which we assent every time we say "Amen." It is a covenant made, a contract signed, a public promise to live and be what is said!

The rich man, dressed in "purple garments and fine linen," in his Jewish prayer at synagogue and at home likely uttered "amen" again and again. But he lived in a "bubble," thinking only of himself, insensitive and indifferent to the cries right outside his doors. His "amen" was a mere word, a thoughtless expression. What he had, he wrongly believed, belonged only to him. He could only look upon Lazarus, whose sores were licked by dogs, as "the other" or "one of them," decidedly different than himself. Or one someone else either would or should take care of. Lazarus, he thought, was undeserving, in the wrong place, a place he did not belong. That was the meaning of his "amen." We all know too well that this attitude is all around us: There are "us" and "them." People are attacked because they are perceived as "different" or separate; They are not "us," they are not entitled to what we have. They should be feared. What is mine belongs to me. What is ours belongs to us. That rich man, like so many today, chose to forget his own origins. The sumptuous meals and the fine garments come in many forms. So do the sores licked by the dogs in our world, and country.

The rich man would not let himself enter into any relationship with Lazarus, he would not converse with him, because Lazarus was "one of them," not a member of the culture of sumptuous meals and fine purple garments, the "privileged." He could only judge Lazarus and look upon him with disdain. Lazarus was different, he thought, as he thanked God that he was not like him. To that "lie" he likely said "amen," again and again.

Even after death, crying out for pity from the netherworld the rich man could only see Lazarus as a servant, a mere messenger, as one less than he and his "brothers." Send Lazarus, as slave to me, to "serve me" with some water. Send him, this slave, this one who is different from me and my family, send him as servant to my brothers to save them, only them.

Even in death Lazarus meant nothing to him. For him Lazarus, even in eternity, was entitled to nothing other than enslavement to this rich man's needs.

The purple garments and sumptuous meals could not save that rich man, because even in death he could not see Lazarus as "brother," as one like himself. One wonders what might have happened if, in his last chance for salvation, the "rich man" would have said to Abraham, "send Lazarus as my brother, send him to the others, that they might learn to offer their gifts to the many still lying at their door, to those they believe "do not belong."

Send him to make their "amens" finally true: remind them of the good they have received in their life; the welcome they and their ancestors

had received from others; send my brother Lazarus to arouse them from complacency that they might be saved from themselves. Send Lazarus, my brother... recognition which could have saved the rich man and made his "amen" true.

Perhaps one day, there will no longer be "them," or "those people" but only "us," sisters and brothers all. Perhaps one day our "greatness," a word we hear over and over, will be measured by the way we treat those most in need, those who have nothing apart from their poverty, or the hatred and exclusion they endure. Perhaps one day, the many will stake their lives on the "amens" so easily uttered. Perhaps one day, the "amens" will be true.

