

ctkAlive! Scripture Study
26th Sunday in Ordinary Time
2022—C Cycle



"The Rich Man and Lazarus"
Jacopo Bassano (around 1550)

Opening Prayer

(edited and abridged for use here)

My Daily Service

Make me worthy, Lord,
to serve my brothers and sisters throughout the world...
especially those who live and die in poverty and hunger.
Give them, through my hands... their daily bread.
May my understanding love offer them peace and joy.

Make me worthy, Lord,
to serve those scattered across the world,
who suffer and die in dire poverty.
Use my hands to give them *today*... their daily bread.
And, use my love to bring them peace and happiness.
Amen.

Source: DailyPrayers.org

Scripture Readings

The Prophet Amos (6: 1, 4-7) "Woe to the complacent...."

Psalm 146 (5-10) "The Lord gives sight to the blind... raises up those who were bowed down."

I Timothy 6: 11-16 "...pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness."

Luke 16: 19-31 "There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen...."

Introduction to the 26th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Continuing in Luke 16, the evangelist relates one of Jesus' most powerful and openly countercultural parables, turning the accepted status quo upside down. In doing so, he contrasted the one-sided clash between the "haves" and "have nots" that still plagues humanity today. The *unnamed* rich man didn't mistreat the starving beggar, Lazarus. His lifelong sin came from his daily attitude of omission.

Jesus imagined Part II of this story as a scene taking place in Afterlife. Upon his death, the rich man expected a confetti shower entrance into Afterlife. Instead, he had to watch now dead Lazarus basking in Yahweh's and Father Abraham's welcome. Woops! How did that happen?

Our reading from the Prophet Amos (6: 1, 4-7) becomes clearer from the writing of Professor of Old Testament Alvin N. Rogness* in WorkingPeacher.org. He offers insight into the prophet's ministry by highlighting three key points: (1) Yahweh's judgment came as an expression of love; (2) Yahweh's judgment invited Israel—and us—to stop overlooking harmful behavior; (3) Israel misinterpreted the Scriptures as applying only to the sins of other nations not their own.

The primary message in Psalm 146 affirms that Yahweh wanted the Israelites to place their lives at the service of the marginalized poor. Who are they? Anyone suffering from a lack of food and other necessities for a free and healthy lifestyle.

In the sixth chapter of Paul's first letter to Timothy, his beloved disciple, he encourages his protégé to "compete well for the faith and lay hold of that eternal life." Not just in the dangerous first century of Christianity's existence but often and again today, we experience a widespread crisis of faith. Notice that eternal life here requires deliberate, positive action. We can't expect praise for merely doing nothing terrible in life, like the wealthy man in Luke 16.

* *Chair in Scripture, Theology, and Ministry at Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, MN.*

A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Amos (6: 1, 4-7)

"Woe to those who live in ease in Zion, to those who feel secure on Mount Samaria. They think of themselves as the elite class of the best nation. The family of Israel looks to them for leadership.

"They lie around on beds decorated with ivory and sprawl out on their couches. They eat lambs from the flock and calves from the middle of the pen. They sing to the tune of stringed instruments. Like David, they invent musical instruments. They drink wine from sacrificial bowls and pour the best oils on themselves. Yet they are not concerned over the ruin of Joseph. Therefore, they will be the first to go into exile, and the religious banquets where they sprawl on couches will end."

Personal Reflection

The shepherd-prophet looked around and saw Israel's leaders deceiving themselves about their country's future. Like the rich man in today's gospel reading, ancient Israel's rich sinned primarily by *omission*. They considered the nation secure with no danger in sight. Their own lives and those of their children's children would end happily. With that self-created assurance, they lived prosperously, blinding themselves to the looming crisis. The prophet reminded them—to no avail—that other nations had bigger armies than Israel... other cities had far more wealth. Yet, upper-class Hebrews of the kingdoms of Judah and Samaria lived in luxury, unaware that their blind injustice would ruin them. Amos warned that, when Israel fell (a hundred years later), the rich would be among the first group taken into captivity.

— *What lies might I be telling myself about my life now and to come... and God's role in it?*

Responsorial: Psalm 146 (5-10)

A psalm of praise for God's fidelity.

Praise the Lord, my soul.

How blessed is the one whose helper is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord his God,
the one who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them,
who remains forever faithful,
vindicates the oppressed,
and gives food to the hungry.

Praise the Lord, my soul.

The Lord releases the imprisoned.
The Lord gives sight to the blind.
The Lord lifts up all who are bent over.
The Lord loves the godly.

Praise the Lord, my soul.

The Lord protects those residing
outside their native land;
he lifts up the fatherless and the widow
but opposes the wicked.
The Lord rules forever, your God, O Zion,
throughout the generations to come!

Praise the Lord, my soul.

Personal Reflection

Almighty Yahweh, the people's primary "helper," stood then and always at Israel's service. In turn, Yahweh's "chosen people" needed to cast all their cares on the Lord. Yahweh demonstrated repeatedly an enduring faithfulness and love. Still, weak human nature preferred to seek salvation in potentates who exercised absolute power on earth. Thus the people of Israel found it superfluous to rely on Yahweh alone to watch over them.

The psalmist gave thanks for those who recognized that all blessings came from Yahweh.

— *How do I manifest in my life the psalmist's recognition of God as the source of all that is good?*

— *When I experience a crisis in my life, where and to whom do I go first for support? What is my prayer of first resort during those times?*

— *Who among my family and friends have been most helpful to me in these dark times?*

A Reading from St. Paul's First Letter to Timothy (6: 11-16)

"You, as a person dedicated to God, pursue righteousness, godliness, faithfulness, love, endurance, and gentleness. Compete well for the faith and lay hold of that eternal life you were called for and made your good confession for in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you before God who gives life to all things and Christ Jesus who made his good confession before Pontius Pilate... to obey this command without fault or failure, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who appeared as the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords will reveal at the right time. He alone possesses immortality and lives in unapproachable light, whom no human has ever seen or is able to see. To him be honor and eternal power! Amen."

Personal Reflection

In reading this complex passage, it helps to reflect on the volatile environment of material wealth and politics at that time within the Roman Empire. The surest road to riches for people trying to live and breathe within a pagan Empire called for ongoing cooperation with the ever-watchful Roman administration. This system necessitated—as it still does in modern times—the oppression of whole populations... to the benefit of the few in power.

Christianity posed a threat to the current state of absolute power. The nature of that threat? Love... a society founded on the common good of all, rich and poor alike. As a counter-cultural movement, early Christianity opposed the empirical system as it existed. Instead, Christians envisioned a society founded on equal distribution of material resources. This set Christians throughout the empire on a collision course with absolute power. Attempted changes to the status quo triggered massive empire-wide persecutions and deaths in the late first century.

— *How might my own life and the practice of my faith have fared in the hostile first century AD/CE? How do I see myself standing up against overpowering persecutions in the world today?*

— *How do American laws and our consumption-driven environment affect my reading of St. Paul's advice to Timothy in Chapter 6?*

The Gospel According to Luke (16: 19-31)

"There was a rich man who dressed in purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day. But at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus whose body was covered with sores, who longed to eat what fell from the rich man's table. In addition, the dogs came and licked his sores.

"Now the poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. And in hell, as he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far off with Lazarus at his side.

"So 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, because I am in anguish in this fire.'

"But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that in your lifetime you received good things and Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in anguish. Besides all this, a great chasm has been fixed between us, so that those who want to cross over from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.'

"Then the rich man said, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house (for I have five brothers) to warn them so that they don't come into this place of torment.'

"But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they must respond to them.'

"The rich man said, 'No, Father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'

"Abraham replied to him, 'If they do not respond to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced, even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Personal Reflection

With this parable, Jesus spotlighted the gap between the rich and the inhumanely poor of Israel. In giving poor Lazarus a name but not the rich man, Jesus reversed the prevailing social norm. There existed then—as it does still today—a deadly "law of money." That law allowed the *unnamed* rich man to live apart—literally—and self-blinded to the less-than-human creature on his doorstep.

Arriving in eternity, the rich man found neither friends nor lawyers to plead his case against the isolation he found himself enduring. Even today some might like to know what the rich man *did* to merit condemnation. Clearly, the rich man did nothing to harm Lazarus. Jesus makes it clear that the rich man sinned not by active commission but by thoughtless *omission*. He didn't even notice the discarded human being at his doorstep. Jesus made the point that, in Afterlife, many friends welcomed Lazarus, among them choirs of angels and Abraham, the father of all believers.

— Who might be lying helpless on my “doorstep”? A total stranger? Someone of another race or religion? Perhaps a disowned family member? What does this gospel inspire me to do about it... today?

— When did I ignore someone because I was in a hurry to get somewhere or for another reason? What would it take to get my attention?

— What other famous story did Jesus tell that had this same theme and situation?
Hint: It starts with... “The.”

For Inspirational Listening, Watching, Reading

Note: The following resources follow the theme of Jesus’ parable about “The Rich Man and Lazarus.”

Listen

“[All it takes is 10 mindful minutes](#),” a 10 min. TED talk by [Andy Puddicombe](#)

Note: As you listen to this simple but important presentation, think about this week’s gospel reading.

Watch

“[Why Being Good Is Not Enough](#)” by [Bishop Robert Barron](#) (10 min)

Recorded in August 2022, this presentation speaks to a Covid-related decision that Christians face now... “go back to indoor Mass and other religious services or not.” Based on the Hebrew Bible books of Exodus and Leviticus.

Read

[The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment](#) by [Eckhart Tolle](#)

An essential book for all who seek peace and equilibrium, yes even spiritual transformation--AJG

[Switch Your Brain on Every Day](#) by [Dr. Caroline Leaf](#)

Note: Take it from me. This is a life-changing book that links neuroscience with Scripture and Christian spirituality. The daily commitment is less than 10 min. Starting a 365 day journey seems daunting, but I’m on Day 217 and wouldn’t miss a day. When you start seeing your life from the author’s perspective you might be as hooked as I was.—AJG

Journaling Prompts

Based on this weekend’s Scripture readings, what does the Risen Christ ask me to do TODAY regarding...

- (1) the quality of the love I bring to my personal relationships... and
- (2) my life as an emissary of Christ, committed to bringing God’s love to the people with whom I interact in person and on social media?

*Who needs to receive from me this week a moment of laughter and personal concern?
Why do I hesitate?*

In light of this weekend's Scriptures, take some time to write about events occurring in your life this week and what you see happening in the world.

Preview of Next Weekend's Scriptures

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Prophet Habakkuk 1: 1-3 and 2: 2-4 "How long, O Lord? I cry for help but you do not listen."

Psalms 95: 1-2, 6-9 "Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord."

II Timothy 1: 6-8, 13-14 "Stir into flame the gift of God that you have."

Luke 17: 5-10 "The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith.'"

Closing Prayer

(adapted and abridged for use here)

Prayer of Confession

Compassionate Christ,
I confess that I ignore the suffering around me.
I get so focused on what I have to do
and who I have to see,
that I turn away from those who are suffering.
I ignore those begging for what they need.
I neglect those who suffer and need healing.
I disregard those oppressed by systems of my own creation.

Forgive my willful ignorance, O God.
Break through the walls I've erected
to keep myself safe and secure.
Open my eyes to those in pain...
and my ears to cries of injustice...
so that all may live in freedom.
I pray in your name, Lord Jesus...
Amen.

Source: [Katy and the World.com](http://KatyandtheWorld.com)

Gender usage in these reflections: We are conscious of gender references to God in the Scripture texts. Often, attempts to rewrite these passages result in awkward sentence structures. We have left the biblical translations as they are but do our best to be inclusive in all other parts of the reflection.

The Sunday readings are from the New English Translation (NET)
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