

Proper 21

(Sunday between 25 September and 1 October inclusive) • **Ordinary Time, week 26**

Principal Service readings

Amos 6.1a,4-7	Warning to the idel
Psalms 146	Trust the Lord who loves the righteous
1 Timothy 6.6-19	Being content; Timothy's vocation; be rich in good works
Luke 16.19-31	The parable of the rich man and Lazarus

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus

Jesus told this parable to those among the Pharisees who loved money: ¹⁹ "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 The man who had been rich 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 Abraham 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.”’

Luke 16.19-31 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

Purple was a particularly expensive dye in the ancient world – Imperial purple or Tyrian purple was extracted from snails in very small amounts. One writer of the 4th century B.C. noted that it was worth its weight in silver.

The rich man was wealthy enough to feast sumptuously every day, and did so! Everyone likes the occasional feast, but would you feast every day if you could? If not, why not?

The poor man is named Lazarus, the only named principal character in the parables of Jesus. Lazarus means ‘the one whom God helps’. Does God help him?

This is also the only parable that includes the afterlife. It is certainly a very different world from the earthly one. Whereas the rich man had everything before, he now has to beg even for water, whereas Lazarus is received into fellowship with Abraham.

The gate of the earthly setting has become an unbridgeable chasm in the afterlife. Do you think God intends to cut the rich man off, or is he just being taught a lesson?

Is the positions of the rich and the poor are reversed in the afterlife, why don't more rich people take notice now, before it is too late?

Quotations

1

¹⁷ As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a

good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

1 Timothy 6.17-19 NRSV

2

Respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that ‘everyone should look upon his neighbour (without any exception) as “another self,” above all bearing in mind his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity.’² No legislation could by itself do away with the fears, prejudices, and attitudes of pride and selfishness which obstruct the establishment of truly fraternal societies. Such behaviour will cease only through the charity that finds in every person a ‘neighbour,’ a brother.

Catechism of the Catholic Church. 1994. para. 1931

3

What sort of people are we if we want to take what God gives, but refuse to give when he asks? When a poor person is hungry, Christ is in need, as he said himself: ‘I was hungry and you gave me no food.’ Take care not to despise the misery of the poor, if you would hope, without fear, to have your sins forgiven. Beloved, Christ is now hungry, he is hungry and thirsty in his poor; and what he receives on earth he returns in heaven.

Caesarius of Arles c.470–543

Related topics

For further study:

Social justice; Morality; Kingdom of God

Closing Prayer

O God of justice,
hear our cry and save us.
Make us heed your word to the prophets;
rouse us to the demand of the gospel
and impel us to carry it out.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Collect for the Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C³

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

² *Gaudium et spes* (Pastoral Constitution: On the Church in the Modern World; 7 December 1965) / Vatican II. 27 § 1.

³ *Opening Prayers : Scripture-related Collects for Years A, B and C, from The Sacramentary /*