

## Lectio Divina – 26th Sunday of the Year C

### Contexts

#### Luke's Gospel (in brief)

See previous Lectio Notes

#### Luke 16:19-31 – things to notice

- Follows (almost) directly on the parable story of last week.
- The verses (14-18) in between last week's Gospel and this week's Gospel are about the 'Pharisees who were lovers of money' and who ridiculed Jesus' teaching, and some words Jesus addresses to them. The parable which follows is part of Jesus' reply to them.
- The story Jesus tells is about a rich man and Lazarus (this is not the same Lazarus whom Jesus raises from the dead).
- It's a story about reversal in the next life of the conditions of the present life. The same theme is also found in Egyptian folk law, but there is no dialogue between the characters in the next life.
- Though this very poor man is right at the rich man's door he (the rich man) does not even seem to notice his plight, much less respond with mercy.
- Lazarus is not only poor, but ill and hungry as well.
- The rich man lives like a king: note the language used to describe him: dressed in purple and fine linen & feasting magnificently every day – in other words, he lived like a king. The language serves to heighten the contrast between the rich man and Lazarus.
- Note that while Lazarus is named, the rich man is not.
- Both died – note the language: Lazarus is carried away to the bosom of Abraham, while the rich man is buried.
- There is no commentary made about the morality of either the rich man or Lazarus. It seems that the rich man is condemned because he is rich and Lazarus blessed because he is poor.
- The rich man pleads for relief, but Abraham cannot give it.
- He calls Abraham, 'Father', but mere words do not make one a child of Abraham. Doing deeds of loving kindness (which the rich man did not do for Lazarus) does.
- These deeds would have signified the rich man's repentance from a self-centred and callous way of life. See the first reading this Sunday.
- The dialogue of the rich man shifts from his own misery to an apparent concern for his 5 brothers. He asks that Lazarus be sent to them to warn them. The 'brothers' probably represent the listeners to the parable and us.
- Abraham replies that they already have Moses and the prophets and should listen to them.
- This underlines the point made above – if one follows the teaching of Moses and the prophets and practise deeds of loving kindness, one will not come to the place where the rich man finds himself.
- If the rich man and his brothers will not heed the Scriptures (Moses and the prophets) they will not listen even to someone who rises from the dead.
- The parable story seems to be a warning to the well-off members of the Lucan communities to help the Lazaruses in their midst.
- Another parable story about the right use of possession in Christian life.
- A classic parable about reversal of fortunes and the difficulty of conversion – to enter into God's vision for the world and its peoples.

The Liturgical Context – why does the church choose this passage to reflect on this Sunday?

One of the features of this second part of instructions is Jesus' use of parables. These parable stories (nearly all of them unique to Luke) have been chosen for the Sunday Gospels leading up to the end of the Liturgical Year (on 34th Sunday, the Feast of Christ the King).

22 Sunday – Parable about Jesus' Kingdom Banquet - about humility & doing good

23 Sunday – Parables about readiness & commitment

24 Sunday – Parables about The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, The Parable of the Lost Brothers

(Prodigal Son/Loving Father) – God will search for the lost ones

25 Sunday – Parable of the Dishonest Steward – the right use of riches & wealth

**26 Sunday – Parable of the Rich Man & Lazarus – A reversal of fortunes, difficulty of conversion**

27 Sunday – Parable of the Servant & the Master – Humble leadership as service

28 Sunday – The Ten Lepers – A story of real faith from an unexpected source

29 Sunday – Parable of the Unjust Judge – Persistence will win the day / God readily acts

30 Sunday – Parable of the Tax Collector & the Pharisee – Being at rights with God

31 Sunday – Zacchaeus – A story of conversion

32 Sunday – The resurrection debated – God of the living or the dead?

33 Sunday – Signs announcing the end – Living now in anticipation of the end

34 Sunday – The Repentant Thief – an assurance of mercy

This Sunday's readings continue last Sunday's theme. Once again, the prophet Amos (6:1; 4-7) attacks those who live rich, indulgent lives at the expense of the poor and regardless of their needs. There is a direct parallel between the rich whom Amos criticises for living a life of high luxury and not caring about 'the ruin of Joseph' – their poor brothers and sisters – and the parable Jesus tells in the Gospel.

The Psalm praises God's faithfulness to the poor and oppressed.

The story Jesus tells in the Gospel is about a rich man, his five brothers and a poor man. The rich man does nothing particularly evil. He lives like a rich man, dresses like a rich man and dines like a rich man. But he does not see the poor man sitting at his door. He does not even notice him. The story is told against the background belief that riches were a sign of God's blessing. By the time of Jesus, the teaching of the prophets that blessing brings responsibility seems to have been forgotten. So the story asks the hearers: will they follow the example of the rich man or heed Jesus' teaching (and that of the prophets) about the care of the needy and prove themselves true children of Abraham and take their place at the eternal banquet? Injustice and greed breed violence and often result in the exploitation of the poor. As Pope Paul VI once said, "If you want peace, work for justice".

We are not called to hoard God's blessings, but to be distributors of them so that all have a fair share of this world's goods and can live with dignity and respect.