

# Scripture Study

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C



## Opening prayer

Amos 6:1a, 4-7

(Ps 146:7-10)

1 Timothy 6:11-16

**Luke 16:19-31**

## Overview of the Gospel:

- In the passage immediately after last Sunday's Gospel, Jesus' opponents the Pharisees were scoffing at Jesus' teaching that one "cannot serve [both] God and mammon" (Luke 16:13-15).
- Jesus then addresses to them the "parable" of the Rich Man (traditionally called Dives) and Lazarus. We call this a parable, although there has long been debate if this is the case. Jesus often started his parables with the introduction "There was a man..." (Luke 14:16, 15:11, 16:1). On the other hand, in his other parables he never names any characters like he does here with Lazarus (verse 20).
- The "netherworld" and "Abraham's bosom" referred to in this passage does not refer to heaven and hell as we think of it, but to the shadowy place of the dead that the Jews of the time thought of as the afterlife; respectively, they refer to the abode of the souls of the unjust and the just, before Christ opened heaven.
- This parable, among other things, shows that there is a life of reward or punishment after this one and that where one ends up depends on how he or she spends their life on earth.

## Questions:

- In the First Reading from the prophet Amos, the persons addressed seem to have many luxuries and are living a life of indolence. Why does the Lord find fault with this?
- In the Second Reading, list the things that St. Paul advises that Timothy should make his priorities? How many of these are your priorities?
- In the Gospel Reading, how do the lives of the rich man and Lazarus compare on earth (verses 19-21)? After death (verses 22-24)?
- What determines who enters heaven and who does not (see Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 2:6-11)? Why does this poor man qualify while the rich man is kept out?
- On a scale of 1 (the Rich Man and his brothers) to 10 (Lazarus), where do you stand? Why there?
- What does this passage teach about the afterlife? What should we do with our lives here on earth?
- What does this story teach you about comfort? Suffering? Why is it so difficult for people to be convinced of God's ways? How is verse 31 prophetic?
- Since lacking in knowledge is not the problem of the Rich Man's brothers, what is? How do you see that tendency in yourself?

**Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 633, 1021, 1859, 2831**

## Closing prayer

*I ask you and I beseech you and, falling at your feet, I beg you: as long as we enjoy the brief respite of life, let us repent, let us be converted, let us become better, so that we will not have to lament uselessly like that rich man when we die and tears can do us no good. For even if you have a father or a son or a friend or anyone else who have influence with God, no one will be able to set you free, for your own deeds condemn you.*

-- St. John Chrysostom

**Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!**

# "Lazarus died and was carried to Abraham's bosom"

**Scripture:** *Luke 16:19-31*

19 "There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20 And at his gate lay a poor man named Laz'arus, full of sores, 21 who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; 23 and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Laz'arus in his bosom. 24 And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Laz'arus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.' 25 But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Laz'arus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' 27 And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house, 28 for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' 29 But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' 30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if some one goes



to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead.'"

**Meditation:** What most absorbs your time and attention, and your heart? Jesus' parable about a man who had everything he needed and a man who had nothing turns our understanding of what makes a person happy and successful upside down. In this story Jesus paints a dramatic scene of contrasts – riches and poverty, heaven and hell, compassion and indifference, inclusion and exclusion. We also see an abrupt and dramatic reversal of fortune. Lazarus was not only poor, but sick and unable to lift himself. He was "laid" at the gates of the rich man's house. The dogs which licked his sores probably also stole the little bread he got for himself. Dogs in the ancient world symbolized contempt. Enduring the torment of these savage dogs only added to the poor man's miseries and sufferings. The rich man treated the beggar with contempt and indifference, until he found his

fortunes reversed at the end of his life! In God's economy, those who hold on possessively to what they have, lose it all in the end, while those who share generously receive back many times more than they gave way.

The name *Lazarus* means *God is my help*. Despite a life of misfortune and suffering, Lazarus did not lose hope in God. His eyes were set on a treasure stored up for him in heaven. The rich man, however, could not see beyond his material wealth and possessions. He not only had everything he needed, he selfishly spent all he had on himself. He was too absorbed in what he possessed to notice the needs of those around him. He lost sight of God and the treasure of heaven because he was preoccupied with seeking happiness in material things. He served wealth rather than God. In the end the rich man became a beggar! Do you know the joy and freedom of possessing God as your true and lasting treasure? Those who put their hope and security in heaven will not be disappointed (see Hebrews 6:19)?

*"Lord Jesus, you are my joy and my treasure. Make me rich in the things of heaven and give me a generous heart that I may freely share with others the spiritual and material treasures you have given to me."*

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