

26th Sunday of the Year

Amos 6:1a, 4-7; 1Timothy 6:11-16; Luke 16:19-31

We live in a world that praises achievement and progress and resists and discards any failure. We exist in a society, which says people ought to deserve everything they are able to work for and acquire. The materially successful are often heard of boasting of their personal achievements. The emphasis is not on what people are but what they can do and on what they can acquire with what they do.

God speaks to us in many ways and touches our lives but we often fail to listen to him. He speaks to us in gentle ways and guides us in our weaknesses. The Gospel of today gives us a quick clue regarding the Kingdom values which are different from all worldly values. It tells us that we as the children of God have the obligation and duty to look after our brothers and sisters and care for them. We all belong to one family of God. The parable illustrates the value of the poor in spirit.

The parable in the Gospel of today generally termed as the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus was directed towards the Pharisees. This parable contains the all-important parabolic dynamic of reversal. It begins with the state on earth of the rich person and the poor man and at the end, the reversal of roles. The rich man in the story is nameless but the poor beggar is given the name, Lazarus, meaning the poor of Yahweh as if to reverse the world's opinion. This nameless rich man had more of this world's wealth than he could ever use.

The description of both a rich man and a poor man is interesting. The rich man is not portrayed as evil or villain and the poor man is not described as particularly virtuous and heroic. The story does not tell us how he got the wealth,

perhaps in a proper way through his hard work or he inherited it from his ancestors. He was wealthy. He dressed as a rich man would and had splendid royal living and there was no indication of anything wrong with him. All he did was to enjoy his wealth and his good food, his big house, his fashionable and expensive clothes.

The story is told of a woman who during the war went to live with her husband in camp on the Mojave Desert. She simply hated the place; the heat was almost unbearable, 125 degrees in the shade, the wind blew incessantly, and there was sand everywhere. Finally, in desperation she wrote her parents in Ohio that she couldn't stand it another minute and was coming home. Quickly came the reply by airmail from her father just the two familiar lines: "Two men looked out from prison bars... one saw the mud, the other saw stars."

The daughter did some real thinking, not only with the intellect but also with her heart. She decided to stick to her post. She poured out her love on her husband who responded to her warmly, made a good exemplary family, made friends with the natives, learned to love the country, and eventually wrote a book about it. The desert hadn't changed, but her attitude had.