

Living Lent | Day 14

Dependence on God, and God Alone

Jesus said, "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. 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.' 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. 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.' He said, 'Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house-- for I have five brothers-- that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.' Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.' He said, 'No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He 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 RSV

Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

This is one of the most compelling parables that Jesus tells in a series of parables that begins in Luke 14 and continues into Luke 16. It is compelling not simply because it calls our minds back to so many stories from the Old Testament, or because it would have resonated deeply with Jesus' audience as he preached, but because this parable speaks to us as well.

There are two main characters in this parable: the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man lived a life of luxury while Lazarus suffered throughout his life, a point that Abraham makes when he speaks to the rich man. But let's be clear here, the rich man in the story is not condemned because he is rich and Lazarus isn't righteous because he is poor. No, the rich man is condemned because of his relationship with his wealth. He was so rich he gorged himself on the finest food and dress, and failed to see those who were hurting, broken, and hungry...even when they laid across the gate of his house. This unnamed rich man had all he needed and because of his wealth, he had no reason to depend on God.

Lazarus, whose name means "God helps" and is the only person given a name in Jesus' parables, spent his whole life dependent on God's provision for him. Lazarus had no wealth to blind him to the suffering that was around him. Lazarus had no power to distract him from loving the people who sat by him at the rich man's gate. It's Lazarus' dependence on God that earns him a place at Abraham's side while the rich man suffers.

All of this prompts me to wonder how many times my wealth, my power, and my position have blinded me to the people who are around me? I wonder how many times I've failed to see the people who are laying on my doorstep in need? How many times have I stepped over the Lazaruses around me as I go about my daily work?

Jesus admonishes us throughout the Gospels to have eyes that see and ears that hear. We only develop those capacities, those grace-filled senses, when we allow God to be the source of our strength, power, and provision. Then we, like Lazarus, will find our reward in Christ and not in the fleeting things of this world.

May this season of Lent open our eyes to the lost, the hurting, the broken, the ostracized, and the oppressed, as we seek to walk in the way of Jesus. May we use our blessings to bless those around us and in so doing become witnesses to God's work in the world.

Contributor and Contributing Body of Christ

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