



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C

Fr. David Rosenberg
Institute for Spiritual Direction
visit us at <http://www.ISDministries.org/>

*'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets,
Neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.' Luke 16:31*

This is the second parable about riches in Luke's chapter sixteen. This parable is found only in Luke. The first part of the parable is a rather conventional reversal of fortune. Those who are selfish with their wealth and spiritually numb to the poor in this life trade places with the poor in the next life. This is, of course, a matter of reward and punishment. The Hebrew Scriptures repeatedly make clear the obligation to care for the needy.

The Pentateuch makes clear that landowners in Israel were God's tenants and expected to live in a symbiotic relationship with their tenants and the poor. Every Orthodox Jew of Jesus' day was taught this. The rich man knew the law; he just chose not to live it in his heart and daily actions. The rich man is numb to the presence of the poor and inattentive to the needs of the poor beggar, Lazarus, at his very gate. He feasts every day while Lazarus starves. In the next life reversal of the rich man and poor man begins. In the next life, the rich man finds himself in torment.

What is unusual here is the dialogue between the rich man and Abraham. It is significant that the poor man Lazarus is the only character in Jesus' parables to be given a name. In the first part of the discussion, Abraham makes it clear that there is no possibility of passing from one state to the other after death. The irony builds when the rich man requests that Abraham send Lazarus to come to him with only a finger of water, so great was the rich man's thirst. The spiritual tones here are clear. In life, the rich man's thirst was a thirst for Living Water, but he never realized a kindness toward Lazarus might satiate it. Lazarus was a gift from God waiting to be received. Recall what Jesus taught the Woman at the Well in the fourth chapter of John, *"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water. Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

The second half of the dialogue makes two points. The first is that the word of God revealed through Moses and the prophets makes God's will clear to any who seek it. The second point is that even something as astounding as resurrection from the dead will not convince those whose minds are closed to God's truth.

This final section on resurrection foreshadows Jesus' own resurrection.

As you reflect on this reading, consider the state of the secular culture of unquenchable thirst contrasted with Jesus' spring of water from the River of Life, welling up to eternal life.

God manifests his almighty power above all by pardoning and showing mercy. But we must search our hearts in this life, repent, fast, and give alms to the poor. We are called to *"pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience and gentleness."* 1 Tim 6:11 Then, the divine mercy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus will be poured out abundantly, lighting a lamp unto our path on our Pilgrim's Way of the Cross, leading us to the Spring of Living Water welling up to eternal life.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Jesus told this parable
to those among the Pharisees who loved money:

"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.'

"The man who had been rich said,
'Then, father, I beg you to send Lazarus 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.'

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.'"