

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Mar 16th 2017

Today's Gospel reading tells the very familiar story of the rich man who knew, but virtually ignored Lazarus. We are reminded of Matthew 25:40 "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" by this sad story of this rich man's hardened heart.

I suspect that people of good will, reading these reflections, might show compassion for such a man suffering as Lazarus if confronted so blatantly ("lying at his door"). Our challenge is more subtle in our full, busy and noisy lives. We should ask ourselves who in our lives our Lazarus is. We may be often tone deaf to the brokenness of those around us. We must open our hearts fully to the Holy Spirit to reveal to us who around us is in need of our special love and support because of their life situation which may not be physically obvious but could be just as devastating as the destitution Lazarus experienced.

The rich man valued things over people, and he paid a very high price for his lack of compassion. Let us always strive to be humble and kind and sensitive to the movements of the spirit drawing us to those in physical or emotional need of our support and love.

Jeremiah's admonition in the first reading also supports rejection of the priorities of the rich man. In rejecting trust in human beings, he is not asking us to divorce ourselves from people, but to become indifferent to the values of the world -- to our human temptations and weaknesses -- and focus on trust in the Lord.

Indeed the verse before the Gospel in today's readings says it all "Blessed are they who have kept the word with a generous heart and yield a harvest through perseverance."

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Friday of the Second Week of Lent

Lectionary: 234

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a

Psalms 105:16-17, 18-19, 20-21

Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

Praying Lent Home

Daily Lent Prayer

Weekly Guide for Daily Prayer

Today's readings are about speaking the truth and hearing it. Both in the Old Testament reading from Genesis and the Gospel reading from Matthew, Joseph tries to speak the truth to his brothers who do not want to hear it and Jesus speaks the truth through a parable that the priests and Pharisees do not want to hear. In both instances, the speakers are either threatened with death or killed. But truth is truth and eventually it will be heard no matter how long those who don't wish to hear it avoid it. In Joseph's case, we learn in later chapters that the truth of his dream-based prophecies from God earn him the trust of those who initially enslave or imprison him. In Jesus' case, the truth of his parables earn him the trust of the people – which prevents him from being arrested because the leaders fear a revolt.

But faith plays a central role as well. Faith in the truth being spoken carries the speakers through all the disbelief to eventual vindication. Without faith, the strength to continue speaking the truth in the face of adversity may wane. We are now living in an era where truth as fact is being heavily debated and counter-truths are being offered masquerading as truth. This makes adherence to the truth even more difficult. But faith can keep us on the right path! In the end, like Joseph and Jesus, we will be vindicated.

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