

September 28, 2025
26th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 16:19-31

Jesus said to the Pharisees: “There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table. Dogs used to come and lick his sores.”

“When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in the water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.’

“Abraham replied, ‘My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.’

“He said, ‘Then I beg you, father, send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.’ But Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.’ He said, ‘Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, then they will repent.’ Then Abraham said, ‘If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.’”

Background:

In last week’s Gospel, Jesus told the parable of the steward who reduced the debt of his master’s debtors. That Gospel ends with Jesus telling the disciples “No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon” (Luke 16:13). In the verses that follow that text, Luke records three short teachings of Jesus that focus on the proper attitude toward wealth and the temporal world. Following those teachings, Jesus tells the parable of the rich man and Lazarus that is the text for this week’s Gospel.

Those who lived in the time of Jesus experienced their everyday world believing it was quite limited. They believed that everything had been already distributed according to God’s plan. An unexpected surplus was not to be hoarded or even saved for a future time of need, but was needed now and was to be redistributed to those in need. There was also a suspicion that unusual prosperity might actually be the property of another gained through trickery or some other inappropriate manner. Recall the shepherd and the widow who gather the community to help celebrate the finding of what was lost. They both make sure everyone knows that it is their property that has been found. By joining in the celebration, the community gives their approval. Much like those who join in the celebration of the return of the prodigal son, they lose the right to criticize the father for how he handled the situation.

This attitude toward temporal possessions was supported in their understanding of their relationship to Yahweh. They were Yahweh’s chosen people. It was not as individuals but as a people that they enjoyed the favor of Yahweh. They inherited their relationship with Yahweh, and they were expected to use the gifts of God not just for themselves but for the welfare of all. The need to care for the poor, the widow, and the stranger was not out of compassion but out of the right use of God’s gifts. Part of the scandal of the prodigal son is that he goes off to a foreign land to squander wealth—not only that of his father, but also the wealth that was given to the community by Yahweh. How one used one’s possessions was more important in this society than was accumulating wealth. Situations like being a widow or an orphan left one in dire need, but these were not understood as being a permanent condition. The individual and the community both had a role to play in

changing the situation. The widow could marry again, and the community had a responsibility in finding her a husband. Think of the seven brothers who married the same woman (Matthew 22:24-25).

The parable expresses Luke's concern for the poor and social justice as he first expressed in the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55). Lazarus ends up being "filled with good things" and the rich man being "sent away empty."

The two men live lives that could not be more opposite. In the first part, Lazarus is described as lying at the gate of the rich man. He is not a leper, since he is permitted inside the city, but his condition is so dire that scavenger dogs lick at his sores. He does not even have a garment that would cover his sores. (The dogs lick the wounds in a gesture of trying to offer healing and comfort.) He is ritually unclean, but more importantly, he is unclean in the *reality of his existence*. Lazarus' state is totally deplorable.

The rich man for his part is described as totally decadent. His house, his clothing, and his daily table are like those of an important feast. The purple dye of his garment is so costly that even most of wealthy could not afford such clothing. There is so much food that even the scraps that fall to the floor would be sufficient to satisfy Lazarus' hunger. Even in death, the rich man gives orders: "Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in the water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames" (Luke 16:24b).

People of the day could easily believe that Lazarus's situation was the result of being cursed by God for his sins. The true reality is revealed in the second part of the parable. Both men are known to Abraham, they are both part of God's chosen people. Both share in God's covenant, and that covenant creates a relationship between them. But the rich man ignores that relationship and its responsibility. The fact that he can name Lazarus indicates that he recognizes him and is aware of his presence at his gate. In death, their positions are reversed, but the distance between them remains. "Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours" (Luke 16:26).

Reflection Questions:

1. What is your attitude toward wealth, and the wealthy?
2. Are you aware of times when your personal wealth or lack of it has been a barrier in your relationship with another?
3. Have there been times when wealth has helped you enter into relationships with others?
4. Do you know people who are particularly good at forming relationships across barriers that more typically separate people? What about them permits that to happen?
5. How is the desire to cross the divide between the poor and the wealthy expressed in your life?
6. How do you hear Abraham as he describes the great chasm that separates Lazarus and the rich man?
7. What strikes you about Abraham, Lazarus, and the poor man in the parable?
8. As you reflected with this Gospel, what arose within you? Can you take some time to bring those feelings and thoughts to God?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to fr.paul.gallagher.ofm@gmail.com.

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fsccladto.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America, second typical edition © 2001, 1998, 1997, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. Used with

permission. All rights reserved. No portion of this text may be reproduced by any means without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Please include this information when printing or forwarding.

Excerpts from the readings for September 28, 2025, the Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Thus says the Lord: Woe to the complacent in Zion!
Stretched comfortably on their couches,
they eat lambs taken from the flock, and calves from the stall!
Improvising to the music of the harp, they devise their own accompaniment.
They drink wine from bowls and anoint themselves with the best oils;
yet they are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph!
Therefore, now they shall be the first to go into exile,
and their wanton revelry shall be done away with.

Praise the Lord, my soul!

*Blessed he who keeps faith forever, secures justice for the oppressed, and gives food to the hungry.
The Lord sets captives free, gives sight to the blind, and raises up those who were bowed down;
the Lord loves the just and protects strangers.
The fatherless and the widow he sustains, but the way of the wicked he thwarts.
The Lord shall reign forever; your God, O Zion, through all generations. Alleluia.*

But you, man of God, pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness.
Compete well for the faith. Lay hold of eternal life, to which you were called
when you made the noble confession in the presence of many witnesses.
I charge you before God and Christ Jesus,
to keep the commandment without reproach until the appearance of our Lord,
that the blessed and only ruler will make manifest the Lord of lords,
who alone has immortality, and who dwells in unapproachable light.
To him be honor and eternal power. Amen.

Jesus said: "Lying at a rich man's door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores,
who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table.
When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham.
The rich man also died, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment,
he saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. He cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me.
Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering in these flames.'
Abraham replied, 'Remember that you received good during your lifetime
while Lazarus received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented.
Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing.'
He said, 'I beg you, send him to my father's house, so that he may warn my five brothers.'
But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.'
He said, 'Father Abraham, if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'
Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets,
neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.'"

Excerpts from Amos 6:1, 4-7; Psalm 146:7-10; 1 Timothy 6:11-16; and Luke 16:19-31

Friends,

Here are the Gospel background and reflection questions for September 28th, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. In the Gospel from Luke, Jesus tells some Pharisees the parable about the rich man and Lazarus, the poor man at the rich man's door who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the man's table. When they died, the rich man, tormented in the netherworld, could see Lazarus far off, at Abraham's side. He cried out to Abraham to send Lazarus, with his fingertip dipped in water to cool his tongue, but Abraham explained how that was not possible. 'You received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented.'" The other readings have references to the turning of fortunes, and misfortune following excess, and living with devotion, justice, and love. In the first reading from Amos, "Woe to the complacent, eating and drinking well and stretched comfortably on their couches; they shall be the first to go into exile, and their wanton revelry shall be done away with." Psalm 146 proclaims, "Blessed is he who keeps faith forever, secures justice for the oppressed, and gives food to the hungry. The Lord loves the just, but the way of the wicked he thwarts." In the second reading, Paul writes to Timothy, "You, man of God, pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Compete well for the faith. Lay hold of eternal life, to which you were called." The parable in the Gospel ends with the tormented rich man asking Abraham, "Then send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment." But Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them." The man said, "Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent." But Abraham said, "If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead."

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!