

26<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time 2022 C

**“He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.”** We will say those words in a few minutes in the Creed, and though they zip by quickly, this Gospel helps us focus on what they mean and what they promise.

Two things are going on in this parable of Jesus. One is very familiar to His audience, but the other is a remarkable revelation. At one level, the parable is in line with the constant theme of the prophets like Amos. ***The figure of Lazarus is always relevant because material poverty remains a burden and suffering for so many.*** Sometimes that poverty is striking, like the enormous loss from storm or drought or war, or those who daily live and die – perhaps 10,000+ per day – from hunger around the world. Even where it is not so dramatic, many people struggle today to make ends meet and care for those who depend on them. ***But real as it is, this kind of poverty is not the only way that people suffer.*** There is a poverty that is loneliness, perhaps surrounded by people but feeling unimportant or left out in the busyness of others. To the rich man, Lazarus was just a stranger, and it was simply easier not to get involved; and that is still with us, too, whether from fear or indifference. Some know the poverty of illness in body or mind, or are too young or too old to fit into the bustle of our routines. Responding to need around us remains a daily challenge, and the more aware we become the more overwhelmed we can feel. In many ways, there is something like that great abyss between us in the human family, and we need God’s mercy to cross from fear and indifference to charity and concern.

But Jesus is saying something more, something new: ***there will be an end of time, and He will bring judgment, with the righting of the wrongs of human history.*** Sufferings and injustice, real and serious as they are, will cease, and God has prepared a future for each person, a future inherently linked to their conduct in life. This also gives context for the Resurrection of the Body we also profess in the Creed. ***If*** we simply died, and that was the end of it; if good and evil all ended up the same, gone and forgotten,

then how we lived here would not really matter. Precisely because there IS a life after this, because we will live then as the persons we have become by the choices that create our character, Jesus keeps calling us to charity, patience, and holiness. He offers us forgiveness when we desire to change after our failures, and He helps us with His grace so we can *live like Him now, and thus come to live with Him forever*.

So this parable is a warning, but it is also a message of hope from Jesus, Who made Himself poor for our sake. Sometimes we are the rich man; but sometimes we are also Lazarus, suffering and feeling isolated in our struggles. So we can hear this Gospel as those who suffer might hear it: *a revelation of the infinite and personal care of God for each life made in His image*. As Jesus promises in the Beatitudes, Lazarus finds consolation after his life of misery. We may never understand why suffering enters some lives, even to overwhelm, and yet mercifully spares others. But Jesus assures that God does not forget, does not fail to see, and does not fail to heal. The balance of justice and truth will be restored, even if not in this life, because what happens in this life is NOT the whole story of anyone's biography. All those who suffer here can live in hope because of the Lord's redeeming Cross.

This week, take the opportunity to see and be merciful to someone you might otherwise simply pass by, for whatever reason. We cannot ourselves change the sorrows of a fallen world, but we share in the work of Christ's mercy whenever we make life a bit more human and merciful, because we remember that ***“He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.”***