

The parable in today's gospel is the story of a rich man, "who used to dress in purple and fine linen", and a poor beggar Lazarus who was covered with sores and who laid at the rich man's gate longing to fill himself with the scraps that fell from the rich man's table.

In terms of daily life there is an enormous gap between them. The poor man begs; the rich man always refuses. The rich man has everything in a material sense; the poor man has nothing. Inevitably, they both die and an enormous gap between them remains. Except now the rich man is miserable, and the poor beggar is happy. Completely fulfilled.

The rich man wants to send a message back to his five brothers a warning while they are still living. They better change their ways and have compassion for the less fortunate, lest they end up like him. He is told his warning will be of no consequence because his brothers are so closed minded, so self-satisfied that they wouldn't heed such warnings... even if someone should rise from the dead. This is a powerful message... do we hear it?

He's rich, tailored suit. His money is invested. His plastic is golden.
He lives like he flies first class.

He's young. He pumps away fatigue at the gym and slam dunks old age on the racquetball court. His belly is flat, his eyes sharp. Energy is his trademark, and in his mind and death it is an eternity away.

He's powerful. If you don't think so just ask him. You got questions? He's got answers. You have problems? He has solutions. You got dilemmas? He's got opinions. He knows where he is going, and he'll be there tomorrow. He's the new generation. So the old better pick up the pace or pack their bags. I venture to say he hasn't seen the inside of a church in a long, long time. Who religion now anyway?

He has mastered the 3 P's. Prosperity, Posterity and Power. This is the gospel retold today in a different million places. However - this guy's life was spared by a chance encounter.

He is sitting in the airport on the way to his next deal. He has just settled into a good e-book. The kind he loves to read but never has the time anymore.

He left his children and wife sleeping as the car service picked him up and got him into the airport two hours early. He was actually looking forward to a few moments of solitude and relaxation. He placed his Italian made brief case at his side and lost himself in the story.

An elderly woman walked over and sat nearby. He thought to himself. "All these empty seats and she has to sit near me". The elderly woman looked in his direction and said, "I'll bet its cold in Chicago."

Without glancing up from his book he said in a matter of fact leave me alone voice, "probably is". The woman continued to talk to him, he answered in matter of fact responses as he continued to read.

Then, she dropped a bombshell on his shoulders. She was taking the body of her husband back home to Chicago to be buried. He died suddenly. They had been married - 53 years.

His heart, it seemed, skipped a beat. He raised his eyes to look at the woman. He saw an elderly woman who was grief stricken and suffering. At that moment his day planner didn't matter. The elderly woman needed another human being so badly that she had turned to a complete stranger. **She didn't want his advice, or his money, she wanted someone to listen.**

The man put his book down and took her hand. For the first time in a long time he listened to what someone else had to say. As he listened he forget about the rich, the powerful, the dollar, his appointments in Chicago.

When the boarding call came, they walked down the ramp to the plane together, arm an arm; almost as grandmother and grandson. They

sat in their assigned seats two rows apart. As he folded his London Fog raincoat and placed it into the overhead compartment, he heard the elderly woman say to her seat companion. "I'll bet is cold in Chicago".

He prayed for the first time in years, "Dear God please give the person in the next seat the grace to listen patiently and lovingly."

At that moment the five brothers in our gospel became four. The others would not have seen the woman in the airport, nor would they have offered comfort or compassion. They probably would have changed seats. This guy though recognized Lazarus in that elderly heartbroken woman and fed her with just his presence. That is what God wants each of us to do in the graced moments that fill our lives from time to time. We never know when they will come or if we will recognize them.

The man in the airport was still open to kindness, how many in our society, are not? They are closed minded. They are blindly driven... This life is their destination... Jesus once told John that a new kingdom is coming ... a kingdom where people have value not because of wealth, position or celebrity, but because of what they have done for others - the least of his people. That kingdom is still coming.....