

September 29, 2019, 26th Ordinary C Homily

How our practice of stewardship of money and possessions helps us to care for the poor.

Readings: Amos 6:1,4-7, Psalm 145, 1 Tim 6:11-16, Luke 16:19-31

1. Summary: On our journey of discipleship to Jerusalem (see Lk 9:51) we are being instructed by Jesus in the will of God so that we can be faithful disciples, do the will of God, avoid God's condemnation and arrive at eternal happiness. The main theme of this Sunday's readings is the warning that selfish and extravagant use of God's blessings, like wealth, without sharing them with the poor and the needy, is a serious sin deserving eternal punishment. Today's readings stress the covenant responsibility of the rich for the poor, reminding us of the truth that wealth without active mercy for the poor is great wickedness.

2. Review of the Readings:

3. First reading: Here the prophet Amos throws a fiery glance toward the luxurious palaces of Samaria and describes with a force of language that has come across many centuries, describing typical scenes of the "dolce vita": unspeakable actions, scandalous diversions and the ostentation of their riches. But above all, with these shameful activities, arrives the judgment of God who can not remain silent when confronted with such injustice. The prophet announces the tragic consequences. "For this they shall go into exile."

4. The Psalm praises the Lord God who cares for the poor.

5. Second Reading: Guidelines for a religious and just life. Here Paul admonishes us to virtue, to "pursue **righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience and gentleness**" rather than riches. It is important to read this passage in context. This passage is surrounded by guidelines for those who are rich (1 Tim 6:6-10 – religion with "contentment", "for the love of money is the root of all evils...". And 1 Tim 6:17 on the right uses of wealth; i.e., sending it on ahead.

Note that just before today's reading and, also after it, there are instructions for the rich.

- v. 6, 8 – We need to be content with what we have, be satisfied if we have food and clothing.
- v. 9 – Those who desire to be rich are falling into a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge them into ruin and destruction.
- v. 10 – "For the love of money is the root of all evils"
- vv. 11-17 – Directions for how to live as a Christian. including the growth of virtues: righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.
- v. 12 – "Compete well for the faith. Lay hold of eternal life, to which you were called...."
- v. 17 – The rich should not be arrogant no confide in their riches. One must confide in God.
- v. 18 – Tell (the rich) to do good, to be rich in good Works, to be generous, ready to share, thus accumulating as treasure a good foundation for the future, so as to win the life that is true life."

6. The Gospel: Here Jesus repeats the warning against the selfish use of God's blessings pointing to the destiny of the rich man who neglected his duty to show mercy to poor Lazarus. The rich man was punished, not for having riches, but for neglecting the Scriptures and what they taught.

This is an example of a serious sin of omission. The rich man did not apparently "do" anything to Lazarus. Perhaps he intentionally ignored him, intentionally doing wrong by doing nothing. Criteria for mortal sin: grave matter, full knowledge of the evil of the act, and full consent of the will (see CCC 1855, 1857). Jesus must assume that this rich, Jewish man knew of his responsibility to the poor but intentionally ignored it. Where should have he learned it?

7. There are two scenes and two persons involved.

The two persons are the rich man (Dives – Latin for rich) and the poor man, Lazarus.

The two scenes are the first in this world and the second, in heaven (and looking down on hell).

8. Analysis of the Gospel:

a. The first scene: What evil did the rich man do to Lazarus?

This is the sin which we confess in Mass, "of thought, of word, of what we have done and what we have failed to do. The rich man just stayed in his house, at his table, preoccupied only for himself, egotist, and ignored actively the poor man every time he went in and out of his house.

What kind of justifications do you think "Dives", the rich man, was telling himself every time he saw Lazarus? How was he justifying himself? Do you think that he even needed to justify himself?

b. The second scene: The only thing necessary is the Word of God.

The Gospel here shows us the radical change that occurs in a person's perspective at the moment of death.

Once in Hell, the rich man comes clear on his error and wants to "open the eyes" of his five brothers still on the earth to the values that really count in our salvation. "If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets (that is, their Scriptures), neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead."

"If we do not read the Bible, if we do not study the Bible, if we do not meditate on the Bible, how can we know the wisdom and will of God? The Word of God is sufficient and even goes beyond what we need. Apparitions and miracles are not necessary and will not be given. We must listen to the Word of God to avoid being like the rich man.

9. Important lessons:

1. We are all rich enough to share our blessings with others.
2. It is important to remember that sharing is the criterion of the Last Judgment (See Matt 25:31-46).
Do you think that it is possible to be saved without caring for the poor?
3. Our choices here determine the kind of eternity we will have. It has been said, "Where we go hereafter depends on what we go after, here. Where we will arrive depends on what road we travel. We get what we choose, what we live for. We are shaping our moral character to fit one of two places.

10. Personal examples from the lives of other adults.

Dr Albert Schweitzer, M.D. (three doctoral degrees but his life was changed by this parable).

11. Summary:

First point - we cannot ignore the poor if we want to make it to heaven.

Second point - it is essential to read, study and meditate upon the Word of God in order to know what is God's will, what is good and what is sinful.

Third point: we must develop ourselves as disciples using wisely our time, talent, and treasure.

12. How can we make a difference, especially in relation to our money and possessions?

- 1) Having a disciplined plan.
- 2) Cultivating the gift of generosity.

13. Biblical references which can inform us concerning this point.

1. Matthew 25:31-46 - The vision of the Last Judgment. Are you a sheep or a goat?
2. James 2 - the whole chapter.
3. Amos, chapters 2 - 8. Very strong on sins of greed and gluttony.
4. 1 Tim 6:6-19. This speaks of the danger of the love of money and how to use money to help us arrive in heaven.
5. Ezekiel 16:49. The sin of Sodom teaches us that the sins of the ego and pride in relation to money and to materialism are very much related to sexual sins. Note how in Luke 16 the warning concerning divorce is sandwiched in between the two parables dealing with money and wealth.

14. Verse to memorize: Luke 16:13

"No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."