

26th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – C; Sept. 25th 2022
Amos 6:1a, 4-7; Timothy 6:11-16; Luke 16:19-31

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

The United Nation's Human Development Commission shows how wide is the gap between *the have and the have not*. For instance, the richest 20% of people in the world own and use 86% of all goods and services available in the world. The three richest people in the world have assets that exceed the combined gross income of 48 least developed countries in the world. According to World Health Organization more than 20000 children die daily, especially in the third world, of starvation and diseases connected to malnutrition; whereas, 1/3 of food is wasted in the developed countries which will be enough to feed those children. The above statistics are the small reflection of the gross inequality going on in the world.

In today's gospel through the parable of the rich man and Lazarus Jesus makes it clear that what we do or refuse to do for others can decide what we are going to be in the world to come. This parable is found exclusively in Luke and this is the only parable where a character is given a name. Lazarus is the Latinized form of Eleazar that means *"God is my help."* As we listen to this parable we should not be under the impression that through this parable Jesus condemns all the rich people. In fact, he never condemned the rich people rather only their uncharitable and selfish attitudes. Luke says that the rich man was dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day, which is the sign of royalty and thus he was very rich. He enjoyed a life of extravaganza and luxury in every aspect of life. As there is sharp contrast between the life of Lazarus and the rich man in the world, the same exists in the other world too. If Lazarus suffered rejection, illness and hunger on earth, he enjoys heavenly comfort; whereas, the rich man has only suffering in the other world.

In the modern context one may wonder, what the guilt of the rich man was. We cannot accuse him of doing any harm to Lazarus; he never inflated the poor man's misery; he even allowed him to stay at his door and pick up the scraps fell from his dining table. I don't think that any of us will allow a man with infectious sores to stay at our door. **So it is very clear that the rich man was punished not for something he committed rather something he neglected to do, though he could have done it. In other words, the rich man's sin was not the sin of commission, but the sin of omission.** The rich man, if wanted could have improved the life situation of Lazarus a little. He had enough means to do that. But he simply ignored Lazarus and only concentrated on his enjoyment and Lazarus' pathetic condition didn't bother his heart at all.

Very often we all worry about the wrong we have committed. But none of us perhaps gives attention *to what we have failed to do or simply neglected to do*. We are happy that we have not done any harm to our neighbor; but have we given the possible help to someone? **If we have neglected to do any good, we have committed a sin of omission which is equally grave as the sin of commission.** In the Last Judgment, in Matthew 25:31ff, the people were condemned not because they added more hunger or thirst to the people; rather they neglected to make a difference in the needy. *Jesus says, "I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome.."*

At the same time, these people didn't do any harm to the hungry and the thirsty; they may not have bothered a stranger. This was the same sin of omission of the rich farmer who refused to share his extra grains with the needy. *The Rabbis had a saying, "The rich help the poor in this world, but the poor help the rich in the world to come."* It was the Jewish belief that charity given to the poor would stand to a man's credit in the world to come. No doubt, a man's true wealth would consist not in what he kept, but in what he gave away. Winston Churchill, the late Premier of England says, **"We make a living by what we get, and we make life by what we give."** In the Book of Proverbs we read, *"He who has compassion on the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his good deed."*

Often people complain that they don't have that kind of money to give away. Remember, the Lord does not ask us to do something beyond our capacities. We all can make a difference in the life of our suffering brothers and sisters, in small way or big way. **In the modern age what people lack are not the goods, but the goodwill to share.** Yes, if we have goodwill we all have enough to share with the needy. **St. Basil warns people who neglect to do the charity, in these words: "The bread which you hold back belongs to the hungry; the extra coat, which you guard in your locked storage-chests, belongs to the naked; the extra pair of shoes you keep in your closet belongs to those without shoes. The money you hoard belongs to the poor"** Let us not ignore the opportunities we get to add a little joy in somebody's life by our words and charitable deeds. Let us not go with the attitude, *"I don't bother you and I don't want you to bother me,"* and this attitude will never take us into eternal life.