

## "FIRST IMPRESSIONS"

**26<sup>th</sup> Sunday -C-**

*September 28, 2025*

**Amos 6: 1, 4-7; Psalm 146; I Timothy 6: 11-16; Luke 16: 19-31**

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### **Dear Preachers:**

Today's parable of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus reminds us that the poor who need our help are not far away or out of sight. They are not just newspaper stories or snippets from television news. Like Lazarus—whose name in Hebrew means "God has helped"—they are right at our doorsteps. And like the rich man, we cannot help but see them, for we pass them each day in our comings and goings.

This parable highlights one of Luke's great concerns: the poor and the call to social justice. Again and again in his gospel, Luke raises the question of money and possessions. Jesus' parents were poor—when they brought him to the Temple, they offered the sacrifice of the poor, a turtledove (2:22-24). Jesus warned repeatedly of the dangers of wealth (6:20-26). Recall the parable of the rich man with his bountiful harvest who built bigger barns to store his goods; God calls him a fool (12:16-21). Today's parable of the rich man and Lazarus brings Luke's teaching on money to a climax.

Notice a subtle but important point: Lazarus is the only character in all of Jesus' parables who is given a name. He is not "some poor man," or "the beggar at the gate." He is Lazarus! It is as if Jesus is saying: "Get close enough to the poor to know their names. Don't look at them from a distance and simply feel sorry for them." Our response must go beyond writing an occasional check for "the needy poor."

The parable brims with contrasts. The rich man is clothed in purple garments and fine linens—symbols of luxury. Lazarus is "clothed" in sores. The rich man feasts every day; Lazarus longs for scraps from his table. The rich man is buried with dignity; Lazarus is

carried away by angels. With all his money, the rich man could never afford that!

This is not a quaint ancient tale. The gap between rich and poor continues to widen, creating injustice and instability in our world. A small percentage of the world's population controls enormous wealth. Oxfam reports that the wealthiest 1% own more than billions of people at the bottom. Meanwhile, inflation eats away at wages as families struggle to pay for housing, healthcare, and education.

The parable also speaks of inequality among nations. Developing countries are overburdened with debt while wealthy nations control resources. Inequality breeds resentment and division across the globe.

Pope Francis warns about this in strong terms. He speaks of the "globalization of indifference," in which prosperity dulls compassion, leaving the marginalized unseen and unheard—Lazarus at the gate, ignored daily by the man in purple garments. For the Pope, addressing inequality is not optional charity; it is a moral obligation, especially for Christians.

From the netherworld, the rich man calls out to Abraham for help. Notice: he knows Lazarus by name! He had seen him daily yet ignored him. Even in torment, the rich man remains arrogant, asking Abraham to command Lazarus to serve him. He still treats him as someone to order around. Abraham makes clear: the rich man is not there because of bad luck. He is there because he failed to act with compassion. His indifference put him where he is.

So, what are we to do? Some may give up possessions and go to distant lands to serve the poor. But the parable reminds us that the needy are as near as our own doorstep, our workplace, our schools, our homes. Who are the outsiders we need to welcome into our circle? Who around us bears the "sores" of past injury or neglect? Can our words and care bring healing to them?

The parable speaks of a great chasm between the rich man and Lazarus—a chasm not of geography but of relationship. Lazarus could not cross it; only the rich man could. He had the power to bridge the distance with compassion, but he chose not to.

And so, we ask: Where is Lazarus today? He is in the evening news, on YouTube, in the headlines:

In Gaza, over 500,000 face starvation.

In Sudan, civil war has left more than 150,000 dead, with millions enduring what some call the "largest global hunger crisis."

Famines persist in Yemen, Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and beyond.

Many of these crises are under-reported and underfunded. The world needs urgent, coordinated action.

This parable is anything but outdated. Lazarus is still at our door, waiting to be seen and helped. If we ignore him, we risk the same fate as the rich man.

**Click here for a link to this Sunday's readings:**  
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/092825.cfm>