

Homily

03.21.2019 – Thursday Lenten Weekday (II)

Jer 17:5-10 Lk 16:19-31



It is clear that the rich man in the story Jesus tells is one of the elites of Jesus' day. This was a tiny proportion of the total population, no more than one or two percent. They were so wealthy that they could afford the most expensive of clothing, purple garments, and fine linen, and they were in a position to feast magnificently not just occasionally but every day. In sharp contrast, Lazarus was completely destitute. He was just one example of that large percentage of the population who lived well below subsistence level and who were completely dependent on the almsgiving of others to survive. The enormous social gap which the parable describes is not without its modern parallels.

So this parable is about two men from very different ends of the social spectrum, one very rich and the other very poor. Even though they lived in close proximity to each other, there was a great gulf between them. The rich man treated the poor man as if he was not there, as if he did not exist, even though he was only a short distance away. He refused to notice him. His failure was a failure to notice, to pay attention, and, having done so, to respond to the poor man's needs. We don't always notice one another; we don't always pay attention to one another. Even though we can be physically close to people, there can be, in reality, a great gulf between us. If we fail to notice, to pay attention, the reality

that we have ignored for so long can suddenly hit us in the face, as happened to the rich man in the parable. After death, he was suddenly confronted with what he had ignored for so long. Noticing others, paying attention to them, entails stepping out of our own world and attending to the world of the other, whoever that other happens to be. It could be someone in our own home. Being attentive, noticing is one important expression of authentic love.

We can all be overwhelmed by the scale of the problems in our world, in our country and city, especially the scale of the social problems, the extent of the social divide. We can easily throw up our hands and ask ourselves, ‘What can I do?’ Yet, there is always something each of us can do to make a difference. There is always some step we can take, no matter how small, that can have an impact. Very little was being asked of the rich man in today’s Gospel reading, and that little would have made a huge difference in the life of the poor man, but he neglected to do the little he could have done. We all need to do the little we can do, whatever situation we are confronted with. The little we can do can make an enormous difference. We can never underestimate the power of our giving, even when what we give is very small. It is often not the grand eye-catching gesture that matters so much as the day to day small acts of kindness and generosity. In another place, in the Gospels, Jesus declares that those who give even a cup of cold water will not lose their reward.

Let us pray:

Lord, please free me from my selfishness. Help me to notice and attend to the world of others and give me wisdom and strength to bridge the great gulf prevailing in the Society. May I do, what I can even it is very small, to make a difference in Social gap and modern problems. Let me remain focused upon the dignity of all people, and pour out and share with others the spiritual and material treasures you have given to me.

Jesus, I trust in You.