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“If someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent” (Luke 16:30).

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

[Am 6:1a, 4-7](#); [Ps 146](#); [1 Tm 6:11-16](#); [Luke 16:19-31](#)

Luke’s parable of Lazarus and Dives places the dilemma of blind wealth and invisible poverty in an eternal perspective. The rich man neglects a poor man at his doorstep, and only after his death does he realize that he was a brother he could have helped. Their roles are reversed as Lazarus goes to the bosom of Abraham while the rich man finds himself in hell.

The gap of neglect he created between his wealth and poverty around him is made permanent in the afterlife. Seeing his fate, the rich man asks Abraham to send a messenger back from the dead to warn his five brothers. If they have neglected the Law that made clear their obligation to the poor, Abraham says, they will not listen even if someone should rise from the dead.

Jesus himself will be that rejected and risen figure who makes clear that religion is meaningless without caring for the least of our brothers and sisters in this world. Jesus will identify himself with the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick and imprisoned in another parable of judgment in Matthew 25.

Today's parable was directed at the Sadducees, a privileged class of righteous Jews who were scrupulous about observing the Torah but neglected the more basic commandment to love. Their conservative focus on the Torah excluded belief in

resurrection, so they accepted their good fortune in this life as God's approval. Their utter disdain for the rabble of poor, ignorant, contaminated sinners attributed their suffering to moral and legal failure. They had no obligation to help them.

The problems involved in this parable are complex and challenging. We cannot ignore and avoid the plight of refugees and immigrants on the move in our world, displaced and driven by war and climate change. The burden of conscience these victims present to us in every age and society continues to disturb our sleep and our need for secure, comfortable lives. As churches gather this weekend to worship God, they bring this disturbance and challenge to the Table of the Eucharist. The unconditional love we receive from God is meant to pass through us to others. How this happens is the work of grace. Whether this happens for us requires our openness, discernment and faith.

We listen to the Scriptures to find reassurance and guidance. God's grace is freely given, but sometimes the "Good News" is about disrupting our lives to close the gap between ourselves and those in need around us. If that gap will define our distance from God when we die, now is the time to welcome those who are now missing from the Communion Table in our churches and in our personal lives before it is too late.

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