

# Too Late for Change?

Daily Gospel / Liturgical Cycle C

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Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Luke 16: 19-31

Jesus said to the Pharisees: "There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.' Abraham replied, 'My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.' He said, 'Then I beg you, father, send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.' But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.' He said, 'Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' Then Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.'

Introductory Prayer:

Lord, although I cannot see you with my eyes, I believe you are present to me now, in my innermost being, and that you know me far better than I know myself. I also know that you love me much more than I love my own self. Thank you for loving and watching over me, though I don't deserve your love. In return, I offer you my sorrow for my sins and my hopes to love you more each day.

Petition:

Lord, help me to be generous and serve the needs of my neighbor.

1. Self-centeredness Is Useless and Sinful:

The rich man lived in isolated luxury, absorbed with the latest in fashion and the finest in dining. He did not hurt anyone: He didn't run Lazarus off his property. He didn't mind Lazarus hanging around his table for the leftovers. He didn't criticize him for not getting a job to earn a living. Then what was the rich man's sin? He didn't treat Lazarus as a person. To the rich man, Lazarus was simply a part of the landscape. How many people do I come in contact with, perhaps repeatedly, who are nothing more to me than part of the landscape?

2. Suffering Helps Us Grow:

Our words compassion and sympathy come from Latin and Greek roots that mean to suffer with. Our personal suffering makes us more humane and opens us up to the plight of others. Our vision becomes more perceptive of other's hardships, and our hearts become quicker to respond compassionately. Yet suffering can be a double-edged sword. It can also push us into envy, hatred, bitterness and isolation if we are proud, or if we forget that God permits trials to purify our love. How have I responded to suffering in my life? Has it made me more compassionate or more bitter and self-centered?

3. There Is More to Life Than Riches:

Suffering also makes us more zealous for souls, more apostolic. Unfortunately for his brothers, the rich man's zeal was a zeal come lately. Because he spent all his energy and fortune in avoiding suffering, he was totally absorbed in self. The meaning of his life was completely temporal, and in the end he had nothing to show for it. One of our greatest sufferings in purgatory will be the realization that we could have done so much more for the salvation of souls.

Conversation with Christ:

Lord, I have had a chance to look more seriously at myself in this meditation and to examine if my heart is set on you, if you are my treasure. Perhaps in some areas I still cling to the treasures of this world. But now I want to get rid of them completely. I know that my heart can be set on only one thing and that it will radiate with whatever fills it. Fill me with yourself, so that I may radiate you. Anything that is not you cripples my efforts to give you to others. Rid me of my selfishness. Make me your apostle.

Resolution:

I will pray for someone who is difficult for me to love, and I will be kind to a stranger.