

In this Gospel passage we are confronted by a different outcome experienced by two men: **a bad rich man and a good poor man**. Riches are not evil in themselves, nor is poverty itself good, but rather the way of acting as a wealthy person or our human dignity in supporting poverty, since there are good and bad ways of being both rich and poor. The man in the parable was **living by wealth and for wealth**; it was his only aim in life: garments of purple and the finest linen, feasts, praise from his friends, this is how he spent each day. His name is not given in the Gospel. It just says, "There was a rich man, fond of rich banquets." We will always remember the name of the poor man however: Lazarus. The rich man ended up being more tormented than the poor man was in this life, while in the end the poor man was happier than any rich man in the world. **God gives each person what they deserve**. And earthly wealth distracts us from true treasure. Christ gives us the chance to be rich. But a richness that far exceeds the price of gold and fine garments. In this parable Christ isn't saying that rich people are going to Hell and poor people to Heaven, but rather that **we run the risk of getting attached to material things and forgetting about the goods of Heaven**. The poor man had nothing in this life, and the rich man had it all, but in the end they both died. Money couldn't buy a longer life for this unknown soul. How differently they both ended up! They both had the opportunity to listen to Moses and the prophets but the rich man paid no attention to them.

This parable tells us something stronger. First of all, the rich man didn't do anything wrong, but it was his attitude, his insensitivity to the suffering of the poor Lazarus. He didn't care. Perhaps, the good life, abundance, "linen and purple" often make us blind to the pain of others. And second of all, Jesus tells the parable under the judgment of God, in the same line of the first reading of Amos: *that's why they will be the first to be exiled: the sprawler's revelry is over.* **Jesus is encouraging the rich and poor alike to make it to Heaven.** He tells the rich to share their wealth with the needy and to invest it in works of charity and care of the sick and the dying, so their life can be easier. And he tells the poor to be united to him on the Cross he bore. We need to make the rich people of this world rich in a new way, getting the treasure of Faith. Does today's gospel tell us not to do anything against this injustice? Is the Christian answer just to wait until heaven? Now is the time to receive God's invitation to participate in his justice and solidarity supper. Mercy is the best dress we may wear. What are you going to do in front of an everyday suffering situation? What are you going to do today for Lazarus? In this society in which we live in, it measures a man by what he has and not who he is, and in our Diocese we are celebrating Social Justice Sunday. In this year's Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement is entitled *A Place at the Table: Social justice in an ageing society.* The statement celebrates the value and dignity of older people in

Australian life. It challenges us to recognise their significant contribution to society and emphasises that this contribution should not be valued in mere economic terms. The statement calls for justice for those who are most vulnerable and warns about a view of older people as burdensome or dispensable. Let us listen with attention and with open hearts and minds what Saint Paul is saying to Timothy in the second reading: *as a man dedicated to God, you must aim to be saintly and religious, filled with faith and love, patient and gentle. Win for yourself the eternal life...* How? Who are Moses and the prophets at this time? Our common message is let them listen!!! Then Let them listen to them.

Fr Luis Herrera

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Twenty Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C