

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year C September 28, 2025

Readings

Amos 6:1, 4-7
Psalm 146:7, 8-10
1 Tim 6:11-16
Luke 16:19-31

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1935 – 2022

This is a parable constructed with such masterly skill that not one phrase is wasted.

Let us look at the two characters in it.

First, there is the rich man, usually called Dives (which is the Latin for *rich*). Every phrase adds something to the luxury in which he lived. He was clothed in purple and fine linen. That is the description of the robes of the high priests, and such robes cost anything from \$90 to \$120, an immense sum in days when a working man's wage was about \$2 a day.

He feasted in luxury every day. The word used for feasting is the word for a gourmet feeding on exotic and costly dishes. He did this every day. In so doing he definitely and positively broke the third commandment. That commandment not only forbids work on the Sabbath; it also says six days you shall labor (Exodus 20:9).

In a country where the common people were fortunate if they ate meat once a week and where they toiled for six days out of seven, Dives is a figure of indolent self-indulgence. Lazarus was waiting from the crumbs that fell from Dives's table. In that time there were no knives, forks or napkins. Food was eaten with the hands and, in very wealthy houses, the hands were cleansed by wiping them on hunks of bread, which were then thrown away. That was what Lazarus was waiting for.

Second, there is Lazarus. Strangely enough Lazarus is the only character in any of the parables who is given a name. The name is the Latinized form of Eleazar and means God is my help. He was a beggar; he was covered with ulcerated sores; and so helpless that he could not even ward off the street dogs which pestered him.

Such is the scene in this world; then abruptly it changes to the next and there Lazarus is in glory and Dives is in torment.

What was the sin of Dives?

- He did not order Lazarus to be removed from his gate.
- He made no objections to his receiving the bread that was flung away from his table.
- He did not kick him in the passing.
- He was not deliberately cruel to him.

The sin of Dives was that he never noticed Lazarus. He accepted him as part of the landscape. It was perfectly natural - indeed, inevitable - that Lazarus should lie in pain and hunger while he wallowed in luxury.

The sin of Dives was that he could look on the world's suffering and feel no answering sword of grief and pity pierce his heart.

He looked at a fellow man, hungry and in pain, and did nothing about it.

His was the punishment of the man who never noticed.

It seems hard that his request that his brothers should be warned was refused. But it is the plain fact that if men possess the truth of God's word and if, wherever they look, there is sorrow to be comforted, need to be supplied, pain to be relieved, and it moves them to no feeling and to no action, nothing will change them.

It is a terrible warning that the sin of Dives was not that he did wrong things, but that he did nothing.