

26th Sunday Ordinary Time Year “C”.

September 24-25, 2022

Readings: Amos 6:1, 4-7; 1 Tim 6:11-16; Luke 16: 19-31

“My weight is my love”

I recall as if it were yesterday receiving all sorts of pointers before I took my Driver’s License examination. Signal before you turn, don’t hit the cone when parallel parking, and be sure to check your blind spot before changing lanes. The National Highway Safety Administration statistics report that over 800,000 blind spot accidents occur annually. Long after I stopped holding the wheel at 10 and 2 o’clock (today it’s 9 and 3 due to the airbag!), I remain keenly aware of the blind spot. It was good advice!

Blind spots are caused by the windshield or several pillars of the frame that block the view of traffic. But in life, a blind spot may be defined as “an area in which one fails to exercise judgment or discrimination.” We all have them—they occur in areas of life in which we view events or people in certain ways such that we fail to consider other possibilities.

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, two worlds clash and collide. One, that of wealth and privilege, cannot for the life of him accept that he had his chance to repent, and squandered it. The rich man had ignored the poor in the person of Lazarus, yet he baffled as to why he was not given another chance. “Father Abraham, have pity on me.” Cannot you hear him screaming, pleading: “What do you mean it is too late?” “How could that be?” “Don’t you know who I am?”

The rich man had a massive blind spot in his heart for the poor. There is no real evidence that he despised, cheated or took advantage of the poor, at least not directly. Simply put, the rich man did not see the poor. For all practical purposes, they did not exist on his world.

Dives, as he is known, had become complacent, and complacency is the coronary artery disease of our spiritual lives. It blocks spiritual growth. But from where does this complacency originate? And how ought we to reduce or even eliminate these oversights?

St. Augustine noted in his *Confessions* that “My weight is my love. By it I am carried wherever I am carried.”¹ Much like gravity, we are drawn towards that which we love. More often than not, that “pull” will carry the day. In whatever we place our love, to that we are drawn. Is it work, school, success, sensuality, You Tube videos, card games? Fill in the blank. “My weight is my love.” What is carrying us? What is drawing us?

More importantly, are we aware of the strength of the draw in any of these areas, how much weight they carry in our lives? I am not implying that a medical student shouldn’t strive to learn human anatomy, or a law student prepare diligently for the Bar Exam. When we focus exclusively on one thing, other aspects of life will be pushed aside. That Bar exam becomes your glory; that football playbook is your focus for the Friday night game you play. That Netflix series has you hooked, and so forth.

While he himself hailed from the Southern Kingdom of Judah, Amos’ prophecy was directed towards the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom. He warned the people of their failure to remain faithful to God, more intent on pursuing a life of luxury and missing the signs of the times.² They were completely blind to the injustices around them. We too may not recognize that someone is crying out for help, and we miss the signs.

But when we are laser focused, we run the risk of losing sight of what is around us, blinded to the needs of others, too wrapped up in ourselves. We become either preoccupied, or perhaps even worse– too comfortable. We may not even realize our ‘chippy’ demeanor or curt behavior towards others, but everyone else seems to notice. Due to our own blindness, it is not even on our radar. We are too content in our own world. [“For what is the self-complacent man but a slave to his own self-praise.”³]

The lesson of Lazarus and the rich man is still valuable, still timely, still worthy of our fullest attention. This is not so much a story about wealth

¹ *Confessions* 13, 9: “Pondus meum amor meus; eo feror, quocumque feror.”

² Cf. New American Bible footnote on Amos 6:2.

³ City of God: Book V: Chapter 20, Unde non ei digne servit soliditas quaedam firmitasque virtutum, ut nihil provideat prudentia, nihil distribuat iustitia, nihil toleret fortitudo, nihil temperantia moderetur, nisi unde placeatur hominibus et ventosae gloriae serviatur.

for the sake of wealth, but an account about spiritual blind spots. Today's Gospel presents a challenging truth, but not one beyond our ability to comprehend. God does not command the impossible. It is our own neglect that creates a chasm between us and others.

Gratefully, there is a cure for this malady. We can begin by intentionally being more aware of others. You have seen the bumper stickers- "Start seeing motorcycles" or "Start Seeing Pedestrians." Well, "Start Seeing Your Neighbors!"

"My weight is my love." St. Augustine gave us the diagnosis. The prescription is the medicine of mercy. It is comprised of a heart of compassion, along with ears ready to listen and limbs ready to act in the name of Jesus- these will cure our blind spots.