

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

September 29, 2019 C

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *Thank you, Lord, for gathering us together. Today, you speak a strong Word to us about responding to the needs of the poor. Grant us a portion of your compassion for the hurting members of society. This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Response to last week's Word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator: In the first and third readings, Amos and Jesus address the fate of those whose wealth insulates them from caring for the less blessed members of society. In the second reading, Paul describes the kind of lifestyle that will enable us to lay hold of eternal life.

Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Amos 6:1, 4-7

Amos is regarded as a prophet of social justice at a time in Israel's history when there was a great divide between the rich and poor. This reading is not as it might seem—a condemnation of riches, merry-making and feasting—in and of themselves. Rather, Amos is condemning the *insensitivity* of the rich toward the poor, which will be punished by exile. The “collapse of Joseph” is a reference to the people of the northern kingdom, many of whom traced their ancestors back to Joseph.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 146

This psalm speaks of God's care for the poor, thus connecting it with the first reading and Gospel.

SECOND READING: 1 Timothy 6:11-16

This reading could have been better connected to the first and third readings if the four verses preceding it had been included, i.e.:

For we brought nothing into the world, just as we shall take nothing out of it. If we have food and clothing, we shall be content with that. Those who want to be rich are falling into temptation and into many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils, and some people, in their desire for it, have strayed from the faith and have pierced themselves with many pains.

Given this context, Paul's challenge to Timothy is, in the words of Patricia Sanchez:

His is to be a life of faith, not finance, and of service and sharing rather than striving for a greater portion of this world's goods. His concerns are to be the long-term concerns of the kingdom rather than the short-term concerns of fleeting wealth and earthly securities.

As his model in the faith, Timothy is offered the figure of the accused Jesus, who before Pilate confessed. “I was born for this, I came into the world for this: to bear witness to the truth; all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice” (John 18:39). Following Jesus' lead, Timothy and those in his charge were to be faithful witnesses to the truth of the good news, to biblical justice and to communal solidarity until the appearance of Jesus at God's chosen time.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Luke 16:19-31

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

**A participant reads the Gospel again,
then all pause to reflect.**

GOSPEL: Luke 16:19-31

We learn many lessons from those who go to heaven. But in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, the lesson comes from one who goes to hell.

The parable is unique to Luke's Gospel and fits in well with his portrayal of Jesus as a friend of the poor and the oppressed. The parable has two distinct parts. In part one (vv 19-21), the rich man ignores the plight of Lazarus who only seeks to receive the crumbs from the man's table. In the second part (vv 22-31), the rich man becomes the afflicted party, who then appeals to Abraham to go warn his brothers lest they also end up in hell. Abraham tells the rich man that they will not listen to him just as they ignored Moses—the same way the Pharisees turn their back on Jesus. The parable is addressed to the Pharisees who believe that wealth is a token of God's blessing and poverty a sign of God's disfavor.

It is not because of his wealth that the rich man finds himself in hell, but because he failed to use his wealth to bless those who were less fortunate. As one commentator put it: *"The rich man failed to balance the equation between privilege and responsibility."* For Jesus' disciples, the rich man is a negative witness to how one should use this world's goods. The parable clearly demonstrates that ill-used riches in this life will reap torment in the next life.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what word/s or image/s in the readings caught your attention? Did they comfort or challenge you or touch you in some way?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. If you suddenly came into a lot of money, how would you use it?

3. How might the rich man have gotten to the point that he saw no obligation to share his blessing with Lazarus? Could this happen to us? How do you allow the poor to figure in your life?

4. In recent weeks, we have had several Gospel readings about the use of material blessings. Why do you think that Jesus spoke so much about this issue?

5. Name one thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

JOURNALING. *Having listened to God's Word and listened to others' reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestions: Take to your local Thrift Store stuff from your house that you don't need or don't use. Continue to ponder the gravity of today's Gospel and its implications for us as a nation, as a church and for us personally. Include the poor in your budget.

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

FACILITATOR: Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: *"Jesus, you speak a strong word today about our obligation to share our material blessings with our less fortunate brothers and sisters. May your Word impact the way we use the material blessings of our lives."*

**CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING,
PETITION AND INTERCESSION**

Facilitator: Let us now conclude with prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession. What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we wish to pray?

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

*Lord Jesus,
the age to come should start now.
Now is the time to hear your Word calling us
to make this world a place of hospitality
and gracious care for all.
If we are complacent in any way,
break through our indifference and
move us to act.*