



***Twenty Sixth Sunday Ordinary Time***

Amos 6: 1,4-7    1 Timothy 6: 11-16    Luke 16: 19-31

“Woe to the complacent!  
Woe to the over confident!  
And to those stretched out in comfort, music in the background, a gourmet meal on the table.”

What’s wrong with this picture? Amos was disturbed by it, not because of itself but because of the context. He couldn’t understand how some people could spend lavishly on extras while others around them were unable to provide the minimum for themselves and their families. Its comparable to the rich today paying less than minimum wages to those who have no voice to protest.

The story from Luke echoes the complaints of Amos against the self-satisfied. The rich person is described as dressed in the best. Actually what he is wearing is all imported; linen from Egypt, fine wool from Tyre. The reference to the colour purple, emphasised the man’s ability to purchase the same fabrics that the royals’ used. We are given these details to underline the degree of wealth. The other detail we’re given is that money is no object when it comes to food. He can eat what he likes when he likes.

In contrast to the rich man the other character is very poor. Not only is he poor but he is sick as well. He sat at the gate of the rich man hoping that such a spot would put him in a handy position to receive scraps. He got more compassion from passing dogs. Eventually he died. So did the rich man.

There is a lot of passion in this savage depiction of what was quite common in Jesus’ and our own time.

The next scene takes place in the abode of the dead. The roles are now reversed. The rich man inhabits the darkness while the poor man dwells in light. The rich man calls out for aid. He is refused because the gulf between them is too difficult to cross. There had been a huge gulf between them in life but that gulf could have been bridged if the rich man had wanted it. His new state was the result of his own choices.

The rich man now realises that his family are in for the same fate and in a burst of compassion asks if they might be shown the error of their ways. He is told that they have all the spiritual help that they need although as Abraham points out it would need a miracle to change their selfish ways.

This story, like so many Gospel stories, is told to wake us up. We are not impervious to the siren song of advertising that tell us that imported clothes and a house fit for *House and Garden* are the key to happiness. It would be easy to say, "I'm not like the rich man" and think that the story has nothing to say to me. But each day we have opportunities to make choices that will ripple out as blessings. The hard thing is that there is no easy list to follow, we have to work it out according to our talents and means. That was why things like no meat on Friday we great you could follow the observance without having to engage in real choices. We have to be able to name who are the poor at our gate. Whether it is the house bound in our street or the stream that needs cleaning or the career that will enable me to contribute time and conscience to improving the lot of others.

Our concern is for all creation. God is not against enjoyment. As Amos says, "It's injustice that makes God roar."

In our society food has gone from being a necessity of life to being a status symbol. We need to remember that shared food is the major symbol of our faith. Our coming to the table is a reminder not only of the gift of Jesus, his life and ministry and his fidelity-to-death but also his words, "As I did, so you do, in memory of me."

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