

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 25, 2022
Year of Saint Joseph

“But the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating will receive a light beating. From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.” Luke 12:48

Many of you may recall hearing this well-known phrase “For of those to whom much is given, much is required.” President elect John F. Kennedy, our first Catholic President; spoke that phrase in a speech given to the Massachusetts legislature in January 1961. He was not drawing from this Sunday’s gospel (Luke 16: 19-31), however, the theme certainly falls in line with our gospel reading for Sunday.

Today’s gospel is the parable about the rich man who is totally self-indulgent and without social morals. He is insensitive to the needs of others; Lazarus was just another sickly, starving slave whom he had no interest in, or even a vague notion regarding some need to care for him. The rich man had no conscience. He is egocentric, filled only with self-love and the love of his possessions, his clothes, his food, his comfortable dwelling. Much had been given to him.

In my efforts to understand the message Jesus has for us in today’s gospel, I feel somewhat compelled to recall the gospel reading from Saturday, September 24, 2022. In this instance, Christ explains to his closest followers the reason he speaks in parables, “Knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God has been granted to you; but to the rest, they are made known through parables so that they may look but not see, and hear but not understand.”

So, what is the point of all these references? What am I trying to say about this message from our Lord and Savior which spans some 2000 years and is aimed directly at all of us here today?

First, this parable about the rich man, although not immediately clear, is a story about love. The rich man had no conscience, no love for Lazarus, no love for anyone or anything that did not enrich or empower himself in some way. Without conscience, how can we have love or justice, or equality in our lives? Some scholars suggest Christ might be considered to be in the form of Lazarus. Each day he gave the rich man the opportunity to receive gifts far more valuable than great earthly possessions. Recall the **purpose of the parables** as revealed in Luke, 8: 9-10. Do you see and understand the significance of this parable about love?

Secondly, recall Luke 12: 48. “From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.” If I may propose a third and final thought about our Savior’s message; are we not, in this house of God, all rich? Do we suffer hunger daily? Do we have dwellings which protect us from the elements? Do we not own a significant amount of material things? Do we not have an abundance of love in our lives? Haven’t we received an enormous bounty in earthly and spiritual gifts and love from our Lord? I pray we may all know the truths found in Christ’s message.

It may help us to keep our hearts and vision pure, if we recall what our dear Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta advised us, “Let nothing come between you and Jesus.” In other words, let nothing come between you and God’s love. If you can follow this beautiful and simple advice, your journey toward Christ will be ever true.