



Bringing Home the Word

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

July 14, 2019

Seeing God in Every Person

By Mary Katharine Deeley

The scholar of the law had the right answer but the wrong question. *Love God with all your heart* is the great Jewish law, and *love your neighbor as yourself* was part of the Holiness Code of Leviticus. But he asked, “Who is my neighbor?” as though neighborliness was determined by a specific set of rules or restrictions: *My neighbor is the person who lives next door, attends my child’s school, or works in my field.*

We, too, may think we’ll help a neighbor, but a *stranger*—an outsider, a foreigner, someone who simply isn’t

“like me”—may be a different matter. For many, there are a few exceptions: When natural disasters strike, for instance, people reach out to help. They clear debris, send money, food, and supplies, and try to comfort the victims. In such circumstances, they are all neighbors.

Jesus turns the scholar’s question around: “[Who] was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?” This change put the responsibility of being a neighbor on us. The answer becomes, *I am a neighbor to everyone I meet*, whether stranger or friend, black or white, Christian or atheist, gay or straight, native or immigrant. Being a neighbor and loving neighbors are part and parcel of loving God and following Christ. Once I realize that, I must acknowledge two connected truths: God sees me as I am, loves me, and calls me neighbor; and the only conceivable response to that love is to see God in every person and to love all people in return. +

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Sunday Readings

Deuteronomy 30:10–14

[Moses said,] “No, it is something very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to do it.”

Colossians 1:15–20

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Luke 10:25–37

[Jesus said,] “A Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight.”

A Word from Pope Francis

You must become a Samaritan. And then also become like the innkeeper at the end of the parable to whom the Samaritan entrusts the person who is suffering. Who is this innkeeper? It is the Church, the Christian community, people of compassion and solidarity, social organizations. It is us, it is you.

—World Meeting of Popular Movements, February 10, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- Can I work toward being a neighbor to everyone I meet?
- At church, can I reach out and welcome those who are not like me?

Is It OK to Be Rich?

By Alice Camille

What's so bad about being rich? Is it a sin, after all, to work hard and reap the rewards of your labor?

The Bible tells us that God hears the cry of the poor, and the Church teaches that God has a preferential option for the poor. This implies we ought to be looking out for the poor as well. So does this mean that God doesn't hear the cry of the well-to-do and God has it in for the SUV-driving crowd?

Lots of ancient morality stories deal with the disparity between rich and poor, and some of these tales fall into the category of "next-life reversals." We can see the basic outline of these stories in the parable Jesus tells of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar (Luke 16:19–31). Remember this one?

The rich man, called Dives by tradition (*dives* is Latin for "rich"), dines sumptuously every day, while Lazarus desires but does not get even the crumbs that fall from the rich guy's table. Instead, he sits outside, his running sores licked by dogs. But it gets better for our hero Lazarus. In the next life, he gets to lie in the bosom of Abraham in heaven, while the rich fellow groans in the torments of the netherworld. Not quite the end of the story, but that's enough for now.

Why does the rich man get the netherworld, while Lazarus gets



paradise? There is no hint in the story that Dives is a bad man or, for that matter, that Lazarus is a good one. So we are nearly led to believe that being rich is the sin of the first man and being poor is the virtue of the second. But that's not right, either. So what are we to understand from this story?

Seeking the Full Story

Perhaps we want more details to fill in the blanks about these characters. Was the rich man aware of Lazarus at his door? Did he know about his hunger, the sores, the dog situation, and did he choose to do nothing about it? And how about Lazarus? How did he get to be in this awful predicament, and did he do anything to contribute to his striking lack of success?

We begin to imagine that Dives must have made a big mistake (something we might avoid with a little forethought); say, he forgot to give to the Bishop's Annual Appeal or the United Way. And seeing Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham at the end, we presume that he ended up on skid row, not because he was lazy, did poorly on his SATs, or had a drinking problem, but because he got laid off in a failing economy. What we want, in short, is evidence that the rich guy was a bad guy and the poor man a victim of injustice.

But the parable tells us none of that. What we do know is that the rich man had a great life and Lazarus had a lousy time of it, and that after they died, their fortunes were reversed.

Final Lessons

Unlike many afterlife reversal stories from antiquity, however, Lazarus does not jeer at the rich man's fate from where he now sits in heaven, a sign perhaps of his good hearted. He never wanted to break into the rich man's house and take his stuff, either; he just wanted the crumbs.

And we catch a glimpse of the rich man's soul when he does not protest his final state but asks only to warn his brothers, still guilty of the same choices he made. This in itself may be an admission of his negligence. Dives acknowledges that his brothers remain blissfully unrepentant in their self-serving lifestyle.

The bottom line would seem to be that those whose needs are well-met (and then some) must have great compassion. No excuses. Suffering is all around us. So, pick a cause, any cause: But be compassionate! It's no sin to be rich, but it's a fatal error not to share. +

PRAYER

Lord, you are near to the brokenhearted. Help me be a good neighbor to all people.

—From *Faithful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 15–20

Monday, St. Bonaventure: Ex 1:8–14, 22 / Mt 10:34–11:1

Tuesday, Weekday: Ex 2:1–15a / Mt 11:20–24

Wednesday, Weekday: Ex 3:1–6, 9–12 / Mt 11:25–27

Thursday, Weekday: Ex 3:13–20 / Mt 11:28–30

Friday, Weekday: Ex 11:10–12:14 / Mt 12:1–8

Saturday, Weekday: Ex 12:37–42 / Mt 12:14–21

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