

Sept. 29, 2019 Luke 16: 19-31 & Amos 6: 1a, 4-7

[www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Connie May © 8/25/19

Drawing with permission by Fr. Robert Beck

Fr. Robert Beck ([subscription](#))

More Fr. Beck (With permission)

Stone, Naomi. [New Beginning](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Getting and not Getting the Secret](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#) 9/25/16

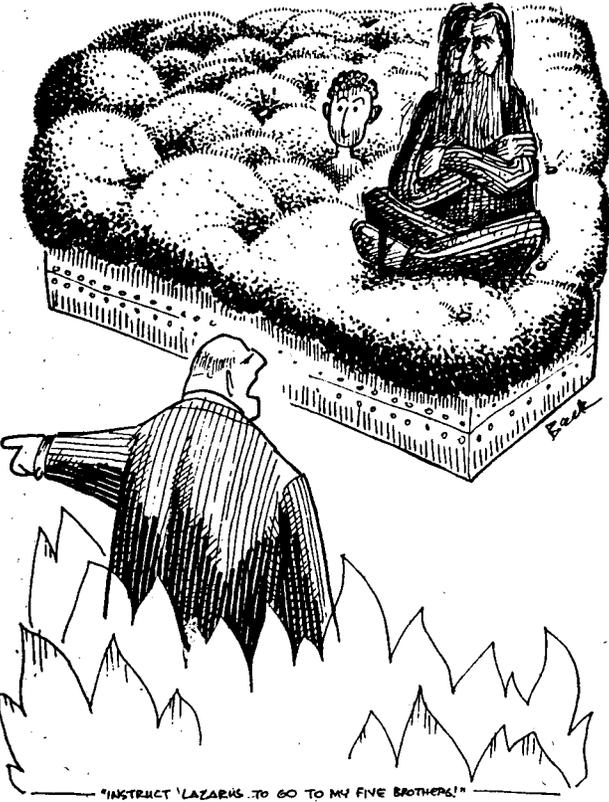
### ENTERING THE SCENE:

When things are going our way, we settle into complacency that blinds us to many things. Our rich person in today's scripture rests comfortably in the common sense of his day—that God rewards the good and punishes the bad. He can pass by Lazarus without seeing his need, and might have even thought himself generous even letting him beg by his door.

Jesus, ever the teacher, takes the 'common sense' of his day and invites us to "uncommon sense": the uncommon sense of the Father who repeatedly reminds us that we are all children of the same family. We are to see as the Father sees. By such seeing we can bridge the great chasm that separates us from each other. Jesus has come back from the dead. The question now is: do we see?

### Luke 16:19-31

19 There was a **rich man** who was dressed in **purple** and **fine linen** and lived in **luxury** every day. 20 At his gate was laid a **beggar** named **Lazarus**, covered with sores 21 and longing to eat what fell from the



"INSTRUCT LAZARUS TO GO TO MY FIVE BROTHERS!"

rich man's table. Even the **dogs** came and licked his **sores**. 22 The time came when the **beggar died** and the angels carried him to **Abraham's side**. The **rich man** also **died** and was **buried**. 23 In **hell**, where he was in **torment**, he looked up and saw **Abraham** far away, with **Lazarus** by his side. 24 So he called to him, '**Father Abraham**, have **pity** on me and send **Lazarus** to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my **tongue**, because I am in **agony** in this fire.' 25 But **Abraham** replied, '**Son**, remember that in your lifetime you received your **good things**, while **Lazarus** received **bad things**, but now he is **comforted** here and you are in **agony**. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a **great chasm** has been fixed, so that those who want to **go from here to you** cannot, nor can anyone **cross over** from there to us.' 27 He answered, 'Then I beg you, **father**, send **Lazarus** to my **father's house**, 28 for I have **five brothers**. Let him **warn** them, so that they will not also come to this place of **torment**.' 29 **Abraham** replied, 'They have **Moses** and the **Prophets**; let them **listen** to them.' 30 No, **father Abraham**,' he said, 'but if someone from the **dead** goes to them, they will **repent**.' 31 He said to him, 'If they do not listen to **Moses** and the **Prophets**, they will not be **convinced** even if **someone rises** from the **dead**.'"

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** The rich man only "crossed over" into wisdom when he himself was suffering. How has suffering helped you do the same?

**PRAYER:** Lord, today you challenge me by revealing that I cannot come to you through someone else's faith. You teach that each person needs to do the hard work of looking deeply into your revealed truth, and stepping outside the comforts of assumptions that deceive me into thinking I know enough to coast to Abraham's side. Help me to see as you see so that others will benefit from this vision. Amen.

### WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

**RICH MAN / POOR MAN:** So many of Jesus' parables face us with polar opposites. They confront us with a challenge that often demands a decisive choice that involves risk.

*How do you feel about this method of teaching? Who do you think would have found this parable to be good news? Do you find any good news in it?*

**PURPLE / FINE LINEN:** Both these realities are obvious marks of wealth and luxury on this earth. Many believed that this was proof of being loved by God because of their goodness. (\*more below)

*What are the ways that you use to be aware of God's love? Does this parable challenge your method?*

**LAZARUS / RICH MAN:** The name Lazarus means God helps. The other man is not even given a name and is only known by what he possesses.



*How does this knowledge help you to understand the parable?*

**DOGS:** A common put down in Jesus' day is to be called a dog.  
*What are the common 'put downs' used today? Have you ever been on the receiving end of one? What did it feel like?*

**SORES:** Lazarus must also believe he deserves his punishment because he even fails to ask the rich man for help.  
*Have you ever bought into an erroneous belief that devalued you?*

**DIED / DEAD / BURIED:** All these words indicate the finality of life on earth. They speak of limits, and the realization that this life is a part of a process that

includes a transition that goes in one direction.

*How does this realization inform the way you believe and choose?*

**ABRAHAM'S SIDE / HELL:** Lazarus goes to Abraham's side, which was thought to be the transitional stage lasting 12 months after physical life that promised eternal well-being. Hell, or Hades (see below), was the transitional state that preceded eternal nothingness, and therefore was a time of torment.

*In what ways do you imagine the time and space after physical life? Do you see it as a continuation of a process that has no end?*

**TORMENT / LUXURY:** Why bad things happen to good people is an eternal question. One way to answer the question is to construct a reality that evens the score. This is the solution proposed by the common sense of the day in Jesus' times.

*Do you like this solution? If not, why not?*

**PITY / COMFORTED:** The rich man had no pity for Lazarus during his lifetime, and now Abraham is comforting Lazarus in his next life. Now the rich man is begging for pity but received an equal lack of comfort.

*What is Jesus teaching in this parable?*

**TONGUE:** Often the tongue is the means by which we judge others. By his actions, the rich man had judged Lazarus to be one being punished by God, and therefore not worthy of notice.

*When was the last time a tongue judged you? When was the last time your tongue judged someone else? Compare the feelings of those events. What does this comparison reveal?*

**AGONY:** To be in agony involves great physical, emotional, physiological or spiritual suffering.

*Do you think this parable can cause agony in a person? Does it do that to you? Why?*

**SON:** Abraham recognizes the rich man's claim to being a descendent of his but confronted the man's faulty idea of just what being a son involved.

*Are there any faulty ideas that you have that keep you from knowing that you are a child of God? If so, what are they?*

**GOOD THINGS / BAD THINGS:** People in Jesus' times believed that those who got undeserved good things in this life, would have their "just rewards" in the next life. This was the way they preserved their idea of God's justice.

*When was the last time you confronted this same belief? Did you experience this as a form of spiritual terrorism? How did Jesus deal with this belief?*

**GO FROM HERE TO YOU / GREAT CHASM:** Growth in most forms seems to involve going from here to there and often over great chasms.

*Does this parable present a chasm of a kind in your understanding of God?*

**CROSS OVER:** Crossing over a barrier often involved risk. One must leave the known to get to that which is beyond. Like a trapeze artist, a bar in the hand must be let go of in order to fly to the awaiting bar in the air.

*What 'bars' do you have to let go of in order to fly over to the waiting 'bar' coming toward you in your growth in faith?*

**FATHER'S HOUSE / FIVE BROTHERS:** Earlier, Lazarus was counting on being a son of Abraham to carry him into his eternal reward. Now he sees that this complacency was misguided and wants to spare his brothers this same fate.

*Does this indicate that the rich man has learned something?*

**WARN / LISTEN / REPENT / CONVINCED:** These words speak of the process of coming to faith, and the response to this new faith in a life.

*Does this parable do that for you? What response is it calling forth from you?*

**MOSES / PROPHETS:** The rich man and his brothers had the witness of both Abraham and the prophets as did all those who came to believe in Jesus, yet that was not enough.

*Who have been your Moses' and prophets? Have they been enough?*

**SOMEONE RISES:** By the time the early church repeated this story and wrote it down for future generations, the Resurrection had already happened. Still, there were many that knew of the Resurrection and yet did not accept it.

*Does this parable help you to accept the Resurrection as truth? If so, how? If not, why?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Lk. 16:25 // Lk. 6:24f; Lk. 16:31 // Jn. 5:46f;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Amos 6:1, 4-7; [Ps. 146: 7-10](#); I Tim. 6:11-16; Lk. 16:19-31;

Revised Common Lectionary: Jer. 32: 1-3, 6-16; [Ps. 91:1-6, 14-16](#); I Tim. 6:6-19; Lk. 16:19-31;

### SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

One interesting talmudic story, in which the [World to Come](#) almost certainly refers to a heavenly afterlife, tells of Rabbi Joseph, the son of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, who dies and returns back to life. "His father asked him, 'What did you see?' He replied, 'I beheld a world the reverse of this one; those who are on top here were below there, and vice versa.' He [Joshua ben Levi] said to him, 'My son, you have seen a corrected world.'"

[Tyrian purple](#) (aka Royal purple or Imperial purple) is a dye extracted from the murex shellfish which was first produced by the Phoenician city of Tyre in the Bronze Age. Its difficulty of manufacture, striking purple to red colour range, and resistance to fading made clothing dyed using Tyrian purple highly desirable and expensive. The Phoenicians gained great fame as sellers of purple and exported its manufacture to its colonies, notably Carthage, from where it spread in popularity and was adopted by the Romans as a symbol of imperial authority and status. According to the historian B. Caseau, "10,000 shellfish would produce 1 gram of dyestuff, and that would only dye the hem of a garment in a deep colour" (Bagnall, 5673). These numbers are supported by the quantity of discarded shells which, at Sidon for example, created a mountain 40 metres high. Such figures also explain why the dye was worth more than its weight in gold. In a 301 CE price edict from the reign of Roman emperor Diocletian, we learn that one pound of purple dye cost 150,000 denarii or around three pounds of gold. A pound of pre-dyed wool would set you back one pound of gold.

Prophets are people in our midst who inform us of the future implications of our present actions. Hans Walter Wolff

Lk. 16.19–31: Parable of the rich man and Lazarus. 19: Rich man, commonly called "dives" (Latin for "rich man"); see 6.24; 12.16n. Purple, expensive dyed cloth (Prov 31.22; Lam 4.5; Dan 5.7,16, 29; see also Mk 15.17,20; Jn 19.2, 5; Acts 16.14). 20: Lazarus, the only named character in a parable. There may be some connection between the parable and Jn 11.1–44; 12.1,9. 21: Longed to satisfy his hunger, see 14.13. 22: To be with Abraham, paradise (see 13.28–29); salvation in the Gospel of Luke is not contingent upon Jesus' sacrificial death. Lazarus's moral character is ignored. 23: Hades, 10.15n. 24: Send Lazarus, the rich man regards Lazarus as a servant. 25: He is comforted, see 13.30. 29: Moses and the prophets, see v. 16n. Israel's Scriptures provide needed guidance. 31: Rises from the dead, evoking Jesus' resurrection; see also Jn 11.45–46. 17.1–4; Pg. 145. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

Without prophecy, religion cannot critique itself and ends up being largely self-serving. Richard Rohr

When we read the prophets, we see that without exception they talk about an intimate and loving relationship with Yahweh that led to radical social critique. Jeremiah talks about a love that "seduces him and that lets him be seduced" (Jeremiah 20:7). The normal language of the prophets Amos and Hosea is an intimate language of divine encounter that always overflows into social concerns. They blast a common understanding of Judaism and temple worship which puts them in direct tension with the priestly class. It seemed to lead to the "murdering" of the prophets according to Jesus

We have learned that the judgment of the wicked in Gehinnom (hell) lasts twelve months. Rabbi Eliezer asked Rabbi Joshua, "What should one do to escape the judgment of Gehinnom?" He replied, "Let him occupy himself with good deeds..." "Better is a poor man who lives blamelessly..." (Prov. 19: 1). Whoever walks in blamelessness before his Creator in this world will escape the judgment of Gehinnom in the world to come. Pg. 274. Hertzberg, Arthur. Judaism. NY. Touchstone Books. 1991.

[Traditional Judaism](#) firmly believes that [death](#) is not the end of human existence. However, because Judaism is primarily focused on life here and now rather than on the afterlife, Judaism does not have much dogma about the afterlife, and leaves a great deal of room for personal opinion. It is possible for an [Orthodox](#) Jew to believe that the souls of the righteous dead go to a place similar to the Christian heaven, or that they are reincarnated through many lifetimes, or that they simply wait until the coming of the [messiah](#), when

they will be resurrected. Likewise, Orthodox Jews can believe that the souls of the wicked are tormented by demons of their own creation, or that wicked souls are simply destroyed at death, ceasing to exist.

For us, too, it would be enough to ask, not what is the meaning of this anguish, but that it have a meaning; and that our need of asking be so sincere that it becomes a prayer: Teach us only this: Does man suffer for Thy sake, O Lord? Pg. 268  
Hertzberg, Arthur. Judaism. NY. Touchstone Books. 1991.

The first myth runs as follows: There is only the male system. Our worldview is the only rational way to look at reality. All fairly intelligent and clever people think exactly this way. The Gospel says that until we leave behind our own standpoint, we are not yet converted. It's called narcissism or cultural arrogance. The biblical word for it is "blindness." Jesus, for example, never suggests that the rich people are deliberately bad or mean. He says they're merely blind, they can't see. The rich man can't see that Lazarus is eating the crumbs in front of his door. He even leaves him the crumbs. (Lk. 16:19FF). He's a charitable person, but he understands nothing of justice. The great question in the spiritual life is always the question of blindness and sight. And therefore our prayer must always be, "Lord, help me to see. Let me see where the demons really are – and what the village really loves." The second myth maintains that this system, our way of thinking and living, is by nature superior to all other ways and hence its rules and laws have to be binding for everyone. Pgs. 108-9. Rohr, Richard. Simplicity: the Art of Living. NY. Crossroad. 1992.

\*Picture above: Dinner entertainment at Greek and Roman banquets pictured in a Greek red figure vase probably 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE from southern Italy. The atmosphere at Greek symposia was often something like a modern stag party, and the women, present tended to be there for the men's pleasure. They included flute players like the woman shown.  
Bible Review: 8/2004. Pgs 36-7.

Jesus lived in a cultural world where people believed that all the goods of life (land, wealth, honor, blood, semen, etc.) were limited in quantity and already distributed. They lived by the norm "there's no more where this came from" (Contrast the American conviction "there's always more where this came from." To get ahead or improve one's lot in life was completely unthinkable. A person who gained something was always suspected of taking it-even if unintentionally-from someone else. This is shameful. (Both the woman who found her lost coin and the man who found his lost sheep were obliged to prove to the community that this was indeed what was lost and not something that was stolen to replace the loss.) This background defines "rich" and "poor" in Mediterranean culture. To be rich means, among other things, that one doesn't work for a living. Zacchaeus, the "chief" of toll collectors in his region, hired collectors and levied a percentage on the toll for his support. He did not personally collect tolls. To be poor is to have lost one's basic status, whether landowner or beggar, temporarily. The Bible frequently mentions poor widows and orphans in one breath-neither status is viewed as permanent. Pilch, John J. The Cultural World of Jesus-Cycle C. Collegeville, MN. The Liturgical Press. 1997. Page 142.

Compare Jesus' sense of order with the common sense of his day. [Jerome H. Neyrey](#) writes: "Some people in the first-century perceived the cosmos as much more orderly than the scenario described above. God enjoys uncontested sovereignty, both as creator of the world and as its ruler and judge. All things in God's world are elaborately classified, as in the case of Jerusalem's Temple and Leviticus. In this world, rituals of purification work. Temple feasts such as Yom Kippur effectively purify the nation of sin. The washing of hands, vessels, clothes, etc., and the use of mikvoth effectively purify individuals from uncleanness. In such an apparent world, a man is known by the company he keeps, and books are known by their covers. One's actions, moreover, adequately express one's moral state. The rules of right conduct are clearly stated in codes such as the Ten Commandments or in the conventional lists of virtues and vices. The rights and duties of household members are expressed in traditional haustafeln. Guilt follows the transgression of these rules, even inadvertent violations (Hanson 1990). In such an orderly and clear world, when God acts as a just judge, the divine judgment evokes no surprise. The rules are well known and human actions are thought to express accurately the moral status of the person. Thus in God's presence the books are opened, and God impartially rewards or punishes according to a predictable lex talionis. Thus clarity of moral norms and behavior match divine fairness and predictability of rewards and punishments. Hence, no surprise, no unveiling of secrets, no shocking reversal of status."

Jesus, the Blessed Son of God, hungers and thirsts for uprightness. He abhors injustice. He resists those who try to gather wealth and influence by oppression and exploitation. His whole being yearns for people to treat one another as brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of the same God. With fervor he proclaims that the way to the Kingdom is not saying many prayers or offering many sacrifices but in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick and the prisoners (see Matthew 25:31-46). He longs for a just world. He wants us to live with the same hunger and thirst. Henri Nouwen

God's voice does judge and it does condemn, but it judges and condemns not by coercive force, but in the same way that the innocence of a baby judges false sophistication, in the way that generosity exposes selfishness, in the way that big-heartedness reveals pettiness, in the way that light makes darkness flee, and in the way that the truth shames lies. God's voice judges us not by overpowering us but by shining love and light into all those places where we find ourselves huddled in fear, shame, bitterness, hostility, and sin.  
Fr. Ron Rolheiser

Faith is more a breaking-through, which then allows you to hold on – precisely because now Someone is holding on to you!  
Pg. 121. Richard Rohr: The Naked Now

Bruce Malina explains that in the ancient Mediterranean world “faith” primarily describes loyalty and commitment to another person. A faithful person is a reliable person, one who manifests enduring personal loyalty or personal faithfulness “no matter what.” In other words, faith can be viewed as a social glue that binds people together in this world

**SUGGESTED READINGS:**

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2007. Pgs.164-167.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2010.

Shea, John. The Hour of the Unexpected. Allen, TX. Argus Communications. 1977. ALONE: Page 44. A PRAYER TO THE MASTER OF SHOCK. Page 59.

benShea. Noah. Jacob the Baker. NY. Villard Books., 1989. DEATH IS ALSO A DOOR: Page 79.

White, William R. Stories For the Journey. Minneapolis, MN. Augsburg Pub. House. 1988. 1988. STORYTELLERS: Page 32.