

Sermon Given at the Anglican Parish of Kingscliff and Pottsville, 28-09-2025

Readings: Jer 32.1-3a,6-15; Ps 91.1-6,14-16; 1 Tim 6.6-19; Luke 16.19 -31

Theme: The Poison of Indifference

There's a poison among us. It's not a poison that kills quickly, with drama and agony. It's a slow, numbing poison. It's the poison of indifference -the most deadly in our time, as Fr Maximilian Kolbe said.

And in Luke 16, Jesus tells us a story about it. It's a story of two men, a great chasm, and a name we need to remember.

On one side of the gate: a rich man (*Dives*). He's not named. He's defined by his wealth, his purple robes, his daily feasts. He is the picture of success, the life our world tells us to chase.

On the other side of the same gate: a poor man, covered in sores, named Lazarus. His name is our first clue. Lazarus comes from the Hebrew name, 'Eleazar' and it means "God is my help." Because in this world, God was all he had. The dogs showed him more mercy than the human being just a few feet away.

And here is the heart of the poison. The rich man is not portrayed as actively evil. He doesn't kick Lazarus or order his servants to throw him out. His sin is far more common, far more insidious. His sin is that he simply does not see Lazarus. He passes him every day. Lazarus is part of the scenery, a piece of the furniture of his life, an inconvenient blur at the edge of his vision. It wasn't what Dives did that got him into hell, but what he didn't do that got him into hell. His heart has been numbed by his own comfort.

This, Jesus says, is a damnable condition.

Because the story flips. Both men die. Lazarus is carried by angels to Abraham's side. The rich man is in torment. And from Hades, he finally sees Lazarus. The chasm he created on earth by his indifference has now been eternally fixed by God.

He begs for mercy, but it is too late. The time for seeing was at his gate.

So what is salvation, according to this story? It is more than a ticket to heaven. 'Salvation', Archbishop Rowan Williams said, 'is the healing of our sight' It is the divine cataract surgery that allows us to see the people our society has trained us to ignore. It is to see the Lazaruses at our gates—not as problems, or statistics, or

inconveniences—but as people whose name, whose very identity, is “God is my help.” It is to recognize that in the face of the overlooked, we meet God himself.

The rich man’s final request is for his brothers. He wants Lazarus to go back and warn them. But Abraham’s reply is chilling: “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.” In other words, they have the Bible. They have the law that commands love for their neighbours. They have the prophets who scream for justice. If they won’t listen to that, even someone rising from the dead won’t convince them.

The warning for us is urgent. The judgement in this story is not that God is angry, but that God takes our choices seriously. He allows the chasms we build to become permanent. What we do in time echoes in eternity.

It is not enough to say we haven’t done anything wrong or bad; but what good have we done on earth. What difference are we making with this life God has given us? What positive impact are we making to transform the world, and to make it more equal, just, kind, and humane?

To paraphrase Archbishop Tutu: “Sometimes, God looks down on the world...at Sudan, Gaza, Israel, Palestine and the Middle East or Nigeria, or Myanmar...or the homelessness and domestic abuse in the Tweed Shire, and he says ‘why do my children treat each other like this?’” But then “God looks down on the world today and sees you. And a little angel goes up and wipes a tear from God’s eye. God smiles, because he sees you doing this fantastic work...God sees us doing good and wiping his tears for all the terrible things happening in our world.”

The call today is to repent. Not just to feel bad, but to change our minds, to change our vision. To ask God to break the poison of indifference in our hearts. To open our eyes now, before it’s too late. To see the Lazarus at our gate, and in seeing him, to see the God who helps, the God who saves.

Amen.

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