

Needless to say, this Gospel is an ominous story. It is an urgent story. It doesn't mince words about what's at stake. It doesn't pretend that our years are limitless and our options infinite. This is a story about time running out. About alternatives closing down. This is a story for us. Whether we welcome it or not.

On first hearing, the parable is about wealth. Jesus has a great deal to say about wealth in the Gospels, and none of it is pretty. The key danger Jesus identifies in the pursuit of material comforts and riches - is the danger of blindness. Of moral apathy and indifference. Of a fundamental inability to see human need, human suffering, human dignity, and human worth. And in that blindness – doing nothing because there's nothing seen to be done.

As we did last Sunday this morning we hear of another rich man. We also hear of Lazarus, who was not rich in wealth or health and in his earthly life slipped right through the cracks, with many people continuing to slip through cracks. Just as that silver lost coin did from our Gospel reading a few Sundays back. Like the lost sheep and the lost coin, Lazarus is found by the great Searcher, the one who calls us by name and searches us out.

Lazarus is found.

While the rich man we meet is utterly lost. Not because of his wealth but because he was blinded by his money. As our reading from 1 Timothy tells us It is the love of money which is the root of all kinds of evil, not the amount of money you may have.

The rich man refuses to see anything which does not add to his personal profit. To see is to risk the vulnerability of relationship. Of kinship. Of solidarity. To see is to put aside forever all questions of worthiness, and recognise in the bleeding other our face, our fractured dignity, our pain, our mortality. To see as Jesus sees is to implicate ourselves in the stories of other people's hunger, illness, terror, and shame.

And one day this rich man, like all of us, dies.

In Hades, we hear he is no longer blind to what is around him

..., he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.

And Abraham sees this rich man, the one who turned his sight of eye and heart away from the nasty reality of life for Lazarus. Allowing dogs to lick the poor man's sores. Allowing dogs to feed on his dying. And in this seeing in Hades he has an ask of Abraham - for Lazarus to serve him.

Even in the face of this request Abraham greets him as *Child*. In Greek teknon - the same term Luke uses to show the anguish Mary and Joseph felt when they thought they had lost Jesus in Jerusalem –

Child, why have you treated us like this?

It is the same term the desperate father makes of his older son on the return home of the lost son –

Child, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.

Child.

Even when we get it wrong as a human being here on earth, we are referred to with respect and compassion emphasising the relationship before, and above, anything else. Relationship before and above everything else. Which so very often is more than we deserve. Yet we know that when it comes to God we are gifted and blessed more than we deserve in God's Kingdom.

Abraham asks the rich man Child, to remember ... And he hears that he will spend eternity seeing what he cannot have. Rather than not seeing because of what he has.

This parable is a reminder that we are to remember all we have and all we do with all we have. As with the dishonest manager in the call for us to be shrewd – clever, creative, single minded with how we are with what we have – owning what we have not the other way round – being owned by what we have.

We heard in our Epistle reading that those who are rich are to do good. This rich man did nothing – gave not a scrap, said not a prayer, did not a thing for anyone.

As Edmund Burke said

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing.

We are being reminded to have ears which hear, eyes which see, and hearts which remember. And to do something with what we have.

The rich man had to die before he could see, realise, remember. Let's hope we don't have to die before we remember. Actually, let's not hope.

We can do more than hope. A whole lot more.

We can be good people who do something.

*Wendy*