HOMILY FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF LUKE

Fr. Filip Lommaert Sunday, November 1, 2026

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, one God.

Today's Gospel reading brings us another of our Lord's parables, the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, found only in the Gospel of Saint Luke. Like the parable we heard two Sundays ago, it comes to us from the Lord's own lips as a loving word of guidance for our salvation.

This Sunday also leads us gently towards the season of the Nativity Fast, preparing our hearts for the Feast of our Lord's birth. It draws our attention to works of mercy and reminds us of God's own love and sacrifice, who sent His only begotten Son into the world for our sake.

Let us remember, that in God's eyes the rich are not those who possess earthly wealth, but those who believe in Him and keep His commandments. And the poor are not simply those who lack money, but those who do not believe in Him and set aside His holy word.

What is Christ telling us today? He speaks of the one thing that frightens us more than anything else: death. For some, even to speak the word brings trembling. Death is indeed a great mystery. At some point in our lives, we all ask: what happens after death? Is there anything beyond the grave? Or is this the end? These are weighty questions. If we all believed that life ends with death, we might feel free to live as we please, to sin, to break every rule, and to cast aside the commandments of God. But what if there is life beyond the grave? Then everything changes. Then we are called to give an account of how we have lived, before our conscience and before the will of God. Today's Gospel answers this very question. Let us listen to what it tells us.

There was a certain rich man who enjoyed every good gift God had given him. Yet he used these gifts, his houses, his lands, all he possessed, only for himself. He wore the finest garments, fit for an emperor. He ate the richest food, drank the finest wine, and, as Saint Luke tells us, he "fared sumptuously every day." His heart was wholly turned toward himself, and he cared for no one else.

Saint Basil the Great speaks directly to such a heart: "The bread you keep belongs to the hungry; the coat in your wardrobe belongs to the naked; the shoes you do not wear belong to the barefoot; the money in your vaults belongs to the destitute." The rich man did not understand that what he held was never truly his own but was entrusted to him by God for the sake of others.

Meanwhile, at his very gate lay a poor and sick man named Lazarus, alone, forgotten, and ignored by all. No one offered him shelter, bread, medicine, or even a kind word. The rich man never once opened his door to show him hospitality. Lazarus, covered with sores, longed to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and only the dogs came to lick his wounds and give him some small relief.

Saint John Chrysostom reminds us that "not to share our own wealth with the poor is theft from the poor and deprivation of their means of life; we do not possess our own wealth, but theirs." The sin of the rich man was not that he did violence to Lazarus, but that he did nothing at all.

Then one day, death, that visitor who comes for young and old, rich and poor alike, knocked at the door of each of them. Lazarus was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried, and his soul went down to Hades, where his conscience began to gnaw at him. Saint John Chrysostom says that he would have preferred the sting of a scorpion to the sting of his own conscience, a pain he learned only when it was too late.

From afar, the rich man beheld a place of light, beauty, and joy: Paradise. And whom did he see in the bosom of Abraham? Lazarus, the poor man he had ignored, now dwelling among the righteous. Even then, still thinking only of himself, he cried out to Abraham with two requests. First, that Lazarus be sent to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue, for he was tormented in that flame. Second, that Lazarus be sent to his five brothers to testify to them, lest they too come to that place of torment.

But Abraham did not grant his plea. He answered: "And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot; nor can those from there pass to us" (Luke 16:26). No bridge spans the distance between Paradise and the abyss. And as for his brothers, there is no need for anyone to be sent to them, for they already have Moses and the Prophets, and the Holy Scriptures, which bear witness to the life to come.

Abraham's reply speaks to us even today. Many people think, "If I could only see, then I would believe." But did the Jews not see Christ? They saw Him, spoke with Him, and witnessed His miracles, yet they did not believe, because their hearts were clouded by pride and shallow faith.

This is why, when they heard this parable, it troubled them and hardened their resolve against Him. Beloved, if we do not heed the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Tradition of the Church, and the commandments of God, then even if we were to see Christ with our own eyes, we would not truly follow Him. For the Word of God is Christ Himself. Our relationship with God rests on our faith in Him and our love for Him, and to love Christ means to keep His commandments.

What then shall we do? First, let us hold fast to the truth that our souls are immortal, and that a day will come when the Lord will judge all people, when "those who have done good" will come forth "to the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:29). This is the faith of the Church. To believe that only matter exists is to live as a materialist and not as a Christian, for we are not mere matter. We are created in the image of God, with a soul that does not die.

Second, let us be ready. We do not know the hour of our departure. Just as a thief gives no warning before he comes, so death comes unannounced. When we prepare for a journey, we make sure we hold our ticket, for without it we cannot travel. What, then, is our ticket for the journey into eternity? It is faith in Christ, works of mercy, love for our neighbour, compassion, and everything that is good, true, and beautiful. Let us open our doors, and above all our hearts, to the Lazaruses at our gate, so that when we stand before Christ, we may hear His blessed voice: "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you" (Matthew 25:34).

And now I would like to end with a prayer, on behalf of us all.

O Lord our God, God of love and abundant mercy, we thank Thee for Thy goodness and for providing for all our needs. Cleanse our hearts and minds of all selfishness, neglect, and pride. Grant us eyes to see and hearts to understand the message of Thy Gospel, as we gather around Thy holy table and look forward to feasting in Thy heavenly Kingdom. Forgive us our sins of omission and renew in us the desire to serve others as though serving Thee. For Thou art He who came not to be served but to serve, and to Thee we offer thanksgiving and worship, together with Thy Father who is without beginning, and Thine all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Amen.