

18 PENTECOST (LECTIONARY 26) SEPTEMBER 26, 2010 CYCLE “C”

TITLE: LOVE SEES, LOVE ACTS, LOVE HEALS

READINGS: Amos 6:1a,4-7, Ps. 146, 1Tim.6:6-19, Luke 16:19-31

I love to use examples about husbands in my sermons; we're a helpless pray and it's so easy to find good examples of needed improvement. Many wives would say their husbands are either deaf or simply clueless. A husband and wife were having a heart-to-heart conversation. She said, "Honey, you never listen to me and you never tell me that you love me. I need reassurance once in a while." After her husband thought a moment, he said, "Remember I told you that I loved you when we were married?" "Yes, but that was years ago," she responded. "Well," he said, "it's still in effect." One lady said that she and her husband were snuggled together on the floor one chilly evening watching television. During a commercial break, she said, her husband reached over and gave her foot a gentle squeeze. "Mmmmm," she said, "that's so sweet." "Actually," he admitted sheepishly, "I thought your foot was the remote."

It seems to me our readings today are talking to men who are not only clueless, but these are men who simply dismiss other's concerns from their minds. In our first reading, Amos paints a scene of detached decadence. He pictures for us affluent people dedicated to wealth, comfort, self indulgence and leisure. They are, says Amos, willfully ignorant of the wrath that will come for them. "Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory, and lounge on their couches...eat lambs from the flock...sing idle songs...drink wine from bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils...they shall now be the first to go into exile, and the revelry of the loungers shall pass away." Amos 6:4-7. In our second reading from 1Timothy, the author addresses the disordered desires of the rich or would-be rich who substitute the love of money for the love of godliness. "But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." 1Tim.6:9-10. Our Gospel, of course, shows us how the rich man, Dives, is totally concerned about himself and his brothers and sees Lazarus only as his messenger, his slave if you will, even as he peers up from hell. No clue! No love! No healing! Still he is focused on selfishness as he says, "Then, Father, I beg you to send him (Lazarus) to my father's house – for I have five brothers – that he may warn them so that they will not also come into this place of torment." Lk.16:27. Dives just didn't get it, did he? He still thought Lazarus ought to serve him. He was absolutely clueless about the way

the Kingdom of God works. He was so full of himself and his own desires and wants that he was blind to God.

But Jesus tells us love sees. That's the first thing we understand from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Love sees. Dives passed this poor beggar day after day and never really saw him. You and I need to train our eyes to see those around us, those who are hurting, those in need. Being sensitive to others is not something that comes naturally to most of us. We need to work at it – to be conscious of another's pain, of another's need. Jesus teaches us a second very important lesson in this parable. Love acts. Not only did the rich man not even see Lazarus at his gate, there is nothing to indicate that he helped him in anyway whatsoever. "And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table." Lk.16:20. That is the food he would have given to his dogs, the dogs which licked Lazarus' sores. He gave him nothing, not even dog food. All he did was to neglect him, to turn a blind eye. It's easy not to act, it's easy not to notice, to do nothing. Once a man was telling a story he thought was humorous, a story about himself and his life-long friend. He said, "Old George and I are great buddies. There's nothing we wouldn't do for each other. And that's how we've spent our lives doing nothing for one another." Unfortunately that's true of far too many of us. But love sees. Love acts.

And the third lesson we learn from our parable today is that love heals. "Then Father, I beg you to send him to my father's house...that he may warn them..." Now Dives saw the need to act and to bring healing to his family, but too little, too late. And what does Jesus say? They needed to listen to Moses and the prophets. The message of God has been given over and over again for centuries. You and your family long ago needed to see, needed to act, and in the process heal. But, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophet, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead." Lk.16:31. There is so much healing which needs to take place. And so many today still do not see the significance or believe in the truth and power of Christ's resurrection.

Over the years and especially when I was a chaplain with Hospice, I have conducted many, many funeral services. Often I have seen people torn apart with guilt. They feel guilty not because they never said anything mean about the deceased. Certainly they had never abused their loved one except through neglect. They just did nothing. They were indifferent to them and their needs. They didn't see, didn't act. "I should have been there. I should have done this. I should have done that. I just didn't realize..." We need to ask ourselves: how do I stack up? Do I have love to see? Do I have love to act? Do I have love to heal? **Amen.**

Pastor Barney