



Wednesday Prayer

16th Sunday after Pentecost – Save us from our sin of looking away

Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.'

Luke 16:29

Some things never change. People in the first century were drawn to wealth and power every bit as much as people in the twenty-first century. Those who have wealth have beautiful homes, fine clothes, good food and generally live in comfort. They are admired, celebrated and emulated. Those who don't have wealth may not have even the basic necessities, like health care. They are often shunned, criticized and looked down upon, or simply not seen. As always, Jesus' parable turned everyday life upside down, with Lazarus spending eternal life in heaven, and the rich man in the torment of hell. (Read the full parable in Luke 16:19-31.)

Being wealthy doesn't make a person evil, and being poor doesn't make a person righteous. The unnamed rich man in this week's parable wasn't overtly evil as far as we know. He didn't inflict pain on Lazarus, or charge him for laying at his gate, but yet he ended up in hell. When he asked Abraham if he would send Lazarus to his brothers, like a first-century ghost of Jacob Marley, Abraham reminded him that, like him, they have the words of Moses and the prophets. These words call us to love our neighbors, which first and foremost, calls us to see our neighbors and acknowledge their needs. The rich man simply chose to look away from Lazarus and indulge himself in the comfort that his wealth allowed.

We might not see exploited youth laying at our gate, but we see their stories on the internet, the news and in the papers if we choose to see them. We might not be actively participating in the exploitation, but if we choose to pretend it's not happening, to look away and immerse ourselves in our comfortable lives, we're like the rich man in the parable. The words of Moses and the prophets call us to see our neighbor and respond in love, to pray for them, especially young people who are exploited. We're called to echo those words so others will see and hear by educating and advocating. We're called to see the children in our church and community who might have bruises or inadequate clothing or behavior that indicates that something is not safe at home. In response, we provide safe places for children to gather, support families in the task of raising their children in the faith, and participate in the ministries of organizations that help youth.

Lord God, save us from our sin of looking away. Turn our ears to the words of Moses and the prophets, our eyes to the children and youth held in exploitive situations, our hearts to prayers for their safety and our feet and hands toward acts of justice and mercy. Amen.

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