26th OT-C1 *“Widen Yourself”*  Sept 28, 2025

 I wouldn’t want to be THAT rich guy! Nope, not him. Granted I’m not hurting in terms of owning stuff... I have been at it for many years... planned well, invested, saved... to many on our planet I’d be seen as rich, but that is not our rich guy’s problem. (Abraham was probably richer than he is and Abraham turned out just fine.)

Our rich guy’s problem is that he knew Lazarus (called him by name when he was begging Abraham for help), yet he simply stepped over him in his daily comings and goings. He became complacent with the order of things... easy to do when I’m on top.

Our rich guy also wasn’t just an ego-driven, “me-first” person. He was genuinely concerned, it seems, for his left behind brothers. Definitely not just a “me-first” snob; maybe just a “mine-first” one. I sure don’t WANT to be that rich guy. Yet... I worry.

 I suspect many of us here today prioritize around the needs of those closest to us. We do this as the world warns us of more dangers and scarcer resources; more uncertainty and less security; more time demands and diminished abilities to grab for what we want. We don’t want to be the Gospel villain, but we feel compelled by the world to circle our wagons, build our walls, and shrink our circles of who is IN and who is OUT.

Narrowing down “family” to “mine-first” and “us versus them” mentalities we can complacently settle into a pattern of living that moves us along like an airport traveling sidewalk, right on by Lazarus at our door. And we hear today’s words from Jesus and worry.

 You know who isn’t worried? God! God knows it will all be made right in the end; justice and mercy will meet; His Will **will** be done. As the paperweight on my desk reminds me, “Just love everybody. I’ll sort it out later... God.” And how does God share his vision with us? **God widens our vision of “family.”** Whereas we in our fear of scarcity narrow our vision, God widens it.

You see, God gets to us through us... and usually through others not of our own choosing.

Our Gospel’s Rich guy knew of Lazarus but failed to see him as an instrument of God’s touch. The Rich guy’s narrow vision of who was his “family” separated him from God’s family and ultimately excluded himself from it altogether. God gets to us through others, usually not of our own choosing or liking. **God likewise gets to others through us, but we have to allow him to do so**.

Because we can so easily become complacent in our patterns of “stepping over” Lazarus, I invite you to try this in the coming weeks: (1) STOP (2) Do a 180 (3) Try something new.

I have been impressed with the many varied ways this parish family seeks to help the Lazarus folk in our midst: [food garden, food box, and nursing home visitation], [food collections for Appalachia, shampoo for back-to-school packs, and diapers], [prayer blankets, Twelve Step groups, and more]... I discover something new each week. All of these are ways through which God can get to others through us, and God can get to us through others. These opportunities are right at our exit doors, but we have to **stop**… **turn** **around**… and **put our hands on them**.

If you are worried about being the Rich guy who gets left out of God’s party, (1) stop (2) turn around, and (3) try something new. Widen your vision of “family” and embrace God’s. Not only will your vision clear up, but your joy will be complete.

 I remember my second week here I had the pleasure of joining our Pathway Home ministry as they hosted their monthly meal for the participants of this ministry. It is comprised of folk that for various reasons and life circumstances found themselves on the outs (addiction, homelessness, incarceration, etc.) As I had good conversation and good food with people from other backgrounds, other faiths, and other life circumstances (“other” than most everything the “family” I had grown to know in my life had known) I think I had a vision of God’s “family.” Short of Abraham being there, I think I had a vision of what heaven might be like. You are welcome to join!