

Homily
September 25, 2022
26th Sunday in Ordinary Time
24:10-36:07

Let's time travel for a moment. We're going to go back to February. Remember when it was cold, icy, snowy? You do. I can see you're trembling. You don't like the cold.

We are now at the 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time. The Gospel is from Luke because it's Cycle C. It was the "Sermon on the Plain." Juxtaposed to the "Sermon on the Mount" by Matthew, which is three chapters long. The "Sermon on the Plain" is much shorter. Matthew has the eight (or nine, however you count them) Beatitudes.

Luke, on that 7th Sunday of Ordinary Time, has this: Blessings and Woes. There are four Blessings and they begin, "Blessed are you poor..." There are four Woes, which follow, which say, "Woe to you rich."

Seven months later and nineteen Sundays in Ordinary Time later, we hear a parable about those Blessings and Woes. And what we see today in the Gospel is that comfort is reversed. The one who was comfortable (the rich man), is now not so. The one who was miserable is now comfortable.

Have you ever thought or wondered what the name of the rich man was? It just says in the Gospel, "the rich man." "There was a rich man who lived sumptuously and dined wonderfully." But the poor fellow, the one with the sores, *Lazarus* is named. In part, this is a means of storytelling, parable telling, where you don't name the one (the rich man). It's just this *idea*. And we all know that in the ancient world, people would understand. To name Lazarus says this is the one to pay attention to.

Now, when Saint Jerome, in the 4th Century, translated the Greek New Testament into Latin, he used the Latin word for "rich man," "dives": d-i-v-e-s. And later on, some folks put a capital D on it and said, "Oh. That's his name, 'Dives.'" Were we to sing "I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say," the name of the melody (which we sang last evening) is, "Dives and Lazarus."

So. We've got this name, Dives, now capitalized by someone who thought that was something he needed to do. The word "dives," comes from the same root word that "divus" does. "Divus" means "divine." And a dives, a rich man in the ancient world, was considered favored by God, among the Romans and even some Jews. A rich person was favored by God.

Our First Reading comes to us from Amos. We heard Amos last week. If you recall, Deacon Tom did a wonderful job with it. And he focused on the fact that Amos was from the Northern Kingdom. he was nothing more than a sycamore dresser and he was called to be prophet. And when he was called to be prophet, he'd proclaimed last week: You are cheating people. You're changing the weights, the measures. You're changing the law by trading on the Sabbath. Why? Simply to make your life more comfortable. You're going to make more money by cheating even God.

Today's reading immediately follows. Those same people are told: You are so comfortable. Look at yourselves. You're dining well. You are ignoring the Sabbath. All to the detriment of the poor. You can see how the First Reading and the Gospel fit together.

Amos accuses them of being complacent. He even uses the word in our translation, "Woe to you who are complacent." They were using their means to have more. And complacency in this case meant at the expense of everyone – the poor yes, but even other rich because if you're going to cheat the little guy, you'll cheat the big guy or gal.

Being rich, my brothers and sisters, is not a sin. Being poor is not a sin. Complacency is a sin. For you see, to be complacent means you've gotten so comfortable that you are always seeking more comfort. You've become addicted to it and nobody else matters, ultimately. Oh. Maybe your family. Or your business. But everyone around you suffers because you're so focused on comfort.

How many of you here have a recliner? Raise your hand. What do you do in your recliner? Sleep! (Father raises his hand.) You? (To Joe Buennagel) Recline! (Father looks away in frustration) Thank you, Joe. Someone else. What do you do in your recliner? You watch TV!

The doorbell rings and you're really comfortable, right? What's the first thought that goes through your head when that happens? (Groaning) "Oh...Come on! I'm comfortable. Don't discomfit me!"

Or a guest in the house says, "Could you provide me a glass of water?" "No. I'm comfortable. I'm in my chair. Get it yourself."

It's not wrong to be comfortable. But is it wrong to demand to remain comfortable when someone else has a need?

I have a Lazy Boy. I have a Lazy Boy because some day I will retire. I take naps in my Lazy Boy. I don't watch TV in it because I'll fall asleep. The only reason I have a Lazy Boy is because of that really

large stimulus check that came. But I know when I get to my Lazy Boy, I don't want the phone to ring. I don't want anyone to buzz me from below in the office. It's not wrong that I'm seeking that half-hour nap. It gets me through the rest of the day. However, if someone has a need and I really don't want to help, I might be getting a little complacent and demanding of my own comfort. And I accuse myself of that at times.

There are all sorts of examples that we could come up with, right? Where we are so addicted to being comfortable in our culture. And as you can see, in the ancient world, there were those who were so addicted to it, that the needs of those around them just faded.

Now, we're not like that all the time. I'm not saying that. I don't think there are any rich men here. I think there's a lot of you who work very hard. But, isn't it a good idea if we would reflect upon how much comfort we demand. And how much that may be at the expense of others. It can be very small things. From answering the door. It could be very large things.

But I would offer this for us to spend some time with this this week, especially when we get into that really comfortable space. Ask yourself, "How much comfort do I really need? And how much of the discomfort that others feel do I try to avoid because I'm uncomfortable?" Something to ponder this week. And know that by doing so, yes, we will be discomfited, but we will find comfort in the reflection and conversion