

Twenty Sixth Sunday Ordinary Time – C 2019
Amos 6.1, 4-7 /// 1 Tim. 6.11-16 /// Luke 16.19-31

→in 1974 Evel Knieval attempted his greatest feat...to ride a rocket powered vehicle over the Snake River Canyon in Idaho...

→after successfully jumping his motorcycle over hundreds of obstacles and spans of open air in previous years...he was ready to attempt his crowning glory...the longest and most spectacular chasm ever crossed...

→but immediately after the rocket took off across the canyon, the safety parachute deployed by mistake, aborting his jump and causing him to float aimlessly and unceremoniously to the Snake River below.

→on what was meant to be the daredevil's finest hour...he met his most humiliating moment.....

→of course he blamed the engineering and everything in the design of rocket...and he never got around to making the jump again.....PAUSE

→45 years later, [word has it that] a Hollywood stunt man, who grew up idolizing Evel Knievel will try to redeem his idol's dream by attempting the same rocket powered jump...

→and in an ironic twist, the engineer of the new rocket is none other than the son of the original engineer blamed for the failed attempt in 1974

→both the stunt man and rocket engineer are trying to settle a score a generation later, to rewrite history that records and idol and a father as failures...

→undoing history is sometimes a harder chasm to cross than the Snake River in Idaho...to be sure...

→which leads me to wonder.....what is it about chasms, gulfs, gaps...that make us yearn to cross them?

→early sailors set off over the horizon to find out what was across the seas...NASA put a man on the moon and now has its sight set on Mars...refugees risk everything to cross borders, navigate a sea, or scale a wall....to get to a land that holds the promise of a better life...

→but some chasms are harder to cross than others...and perhaps some cannot be crossed at all....

→and that is the metaphor contained in our Gospel lesson today from Saint Luke.....PAUSE

→today we hear a simple story about two people

→one is a poor man named Lazarus who is in dire need....and the other is a rich man in a position to help Lazarus

→the needs of Lazarus, [in reality] are small and minute,

→[and]...it would take very little for the rich man to help him....yet as we hear, the rich man never does get around to offering his help to poor Lazarus

→as the story goes, they both eventually die, and it is interesting to hear why the rich man is tormented in the afterlife.....

→the sin for which the rich man is suffering from is **NOT** because he ordered Lazarus off his property....it's not because he kicked Lazarus each time he passed by....and it is not because he yelled obscenities and ridiculed him whenever he saw him...

→it's simply because he paid no attention to Lazarus...because he ignored him in his time of need.....PAUSE

→the rich man suffers not because of what he did, but because of what he didn't do...and that was to pay attention and attend to Lazarus when he was in need.

→he didn't take the time to listen...to see what was before his very own eyes....to take care and do what needed to be done

→and I believe that is the purpose, the meaning of this story for you and me today....

→sometimes we can be just like the people at the time of Christ...always looking for a special sign, a miraculous omen that God is present...that he exists...that he is part of our lives...

→when that happens....we often lost site or ignore what is right before our very own eyes....

[→I see this as one of the hallmarks and greatest criticisms of Pope Francis these days]

→some look to Pope Francis to speak and pronounce these grand statements of teaching and doctrine....and criticize him because of his concern for the poor and downtrodden in our midst.

→and Jesus does the same at the end the story today when he says... "if they didn't listen to Moses and prophets...no ultimate miracle of someone rising from the dead is going to change them."

→i.o.w.if people can't see the love of God, the presence and mercy of God, as it exists right before their very eyes, how is someone rising from the dead or some miraculous event going to change people's lives?

→I believe that is the heart of today's story...we shouldn't expect....or look for..... some sort of special messenger or divine intervention to suddenly convince us of God's presence in our lives...

→but rather the messengers of God's presence is found right before our very own eyes.

--in the people of our daily lives....who live among us in our families, and at our jobs, and in our community...

→...the true messengers of God today are the Lazarus' of the world...the poor and the downtrodden, those in need and **those who care for them**

→this gospel calls us to change the way we look at things, the way we look at others, the way we look at ourselves

→and.....to realize that the message, the presence.....of God in our world today and in our everyday lives is right before our very own eyes...

...in the members of our families...

...our co-workers, our classmates, our friends

...it also in the poor and lonely, the broken and downtrodden

...the message and presence of God happens...through each one of us...by our attitudes and actions, our commitments and responsibilities, our duties and obligations

→we are the messengers....responsible for spreading and living the message of the Gospel

--and that responsibility is not fulfilled by some grandiose gesture or expression or by an extreme sense of piety or prayer...but more so by being the best we can possibly be....acting as sincerely and honestly and authentically as we can...

-- by our giving and sharing, our kindness and compassion, our understanding and patience.

→because when that happens...it is then that we are truly the messengers of Christ,

It is then that we are members of his body

...it is then that we reveal the goodness of God to ourselves and to one another....

→ and is then that we can overcome any chasm that separates us from God and one another.