

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 28 September 2025 - The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

Lectionary Readings (*depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on*)

Amos 6.1a, 4–7; Psalm 146; 1 Timothy 6.6–19; Luke 16.19–end

Homily

Today's homily has been written by the Revd Phil Marsh, Priest in Charge, Ely Benefice

Homily – Luke 16.19–end (The Rich Man and Lazarus)

Have you ever walked the same way to work or school and suddenly realised you've missed something obvious for weeks? A new shop window, a neighbour's garden in bloom, even a person who is always there — sitting on the same bench, standing at the same bus stop. Sometimes the hardest thing in life is not learning new information, but simply learning to see what is already in front of us.

That's one of the things Jesus might be getting at in this parable. He tells the story of two men whose lives could not be more different. One is dressed in purple, enjoying luxury every day. The other is sick, hungry, and lying at the gate. He has a name: Lazarus. And that's already interesting. The rich man has no name, but God knows the name of the poor, overlooked one.

The story is sharp. The rich man isn't described as cruel. He didn't beat Lazarus or chase him away. His error, or sin, seems to have been blindness. He lived so wrapped up in his own comfort that he never noticed the suffering at his own doorstep. He had food, but didn't share it. He had means, but didn't use them. He simply carried on, day after day, while Lazarus lay outside.

When both men die, everything is turned upside down. Lazarus, who suffered in life, is carried by angels to Abraham's side. The rich man, who lived in self-indulgence, finds himself in torment. A great chasm lies between them, unbridgeable. What was ignored in life now becomes impossible to escape in death.

But notice what happens next. The rich man, even in torment, apparently still sees Lazarus as a servant: "Father Abraham, send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue." He finally sees Lazarus, but not as a brother, but seemingly only as someone to use. The blindness of his life still clings to him.

Abraham's reply is sobering: "You received your good things in your lifetime, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony." We need some caution here; it isn't that wealth itself is evil, nor is it that poverty is somehow righteously rewarded, but what we can clearly see in the parable is that wealth without compassion

becomes a trap. It blinds us. It lulls us into thinking life is about more comfort, more security, more for me.

Then comes the second part of the story. The rich man begs that Lazarus be sent to warn his brothers. But Abraham says: “They have Moses and the prophets; let them listen to them.” In other words: God has already spoken. The scriptures are already clear — love your neighbour, care for the poor, walk humbly with God. If they won’t listen to that, no miracle will convince them.

Here’s where the story cuts close to home. We already know what God asks of us. The question is: will we open our eyes? Will we live differently because of it? Do we live differently because of it? So what does this mean for us as disciples today?

First, it means **seeing with new eyes**. Lazarus lay right at the gate. The rich man had to step past him daily. The challenge for us is: who is at our gate? Who are the people God is calling us to notice? It may be a lonely neighbour, someone struggling quietly with mental health, the person at work who never gets included. It may be the wider needs of our community: those who use the food bank, those waiting months for a hospital appointment, those weighed down with debt. These aren’t problems far away; they are often right outside our door.

Second, it means **resisting distraction**. The rich man wasn’t deliberately cruel. He was distracted by his lifestyle. And distraction is just as dangerous for us. We can be so busy chasing the next thing — the next purchase, the next plan, the endless to-do list — that we simply don’t notice people around us. Our culture tells us to aim for comfort and security, but Jesus calls us to notice the unnoticed and to make room in our lives for others.

Third, it means **living generously**. This isn’t just about money. It’s about our time, our attention, our willingness to be interrupted. Sometimes the greatest gift we can give is to stop and listen. To share a meal. To offer a lift. To pray with someone. To write a card. Generosity is not about grand gestures but about everyday choices to love.

And fourth, it means **seeking God’s kingdom first**. The rich man built his kingdom around himself, and it collapsed. Lazarus, though powerless, is gathered into God’s eternal kingdom. Jesus is inviting us to see life in the light of eternity. The choices we make now — how we spend, how we notice, how we care — are not small. They echo in eternity.

The kind of kingdom living that Jesus is pointing to doesn’t always make headlines. But it does change lives. It’s often small, unseen, everyday faithfulness. It looks like pausing to talk with someone who is usually overlooked. It looks like choosing generosity when it would be easier to keep what we have. It looks like setting aside our own busyness in order to listen, really listen, to a neighbour or friend.

This is the way of the kingdom: not grand gestures, but a pattern of life shaped by noticing and responding. It’s the way of Jesus himself, who stopped for the blind man calling out on the roadside, who ate with outcasts, who welcomed children when others brushed them aside.

The challenge of this parable is not simply to feel sorry for Lazarus, but to learn to see the people at our own gates — and to act. Not to be distracted by wealth, comfort, or

busyness, but to seek the kingdom first. To let God reshape our priorities so that our lives become places of blessing for others.

And here's the good news: God doesn't leave us to do this alone. His Spirit opens our eyes and softens our hearts. He gives us courage to step out of our comfort zone, and strength to live generously. This is not about guilt; it is about grace. God invites us into a new way of seeing, a new way of living, a new way of sharing.

So today's gospel isn't just a warning — though it is sharp. It's also an invitation to open your eyes; notice who is near; live generously; seek first the kingdom. Because every Lazarus has a name, and God knows them. He knows the people we overlook. And he is asking us to join him in bringing comfort, dignity, and love to those the world forgets. And he calls us, his people, to know them too.

This week, may we be attentive disciples: taking time to notice, setting aside distractions, and seeking the kingdom of God in the ordinary moments of our lives. Amen.

Notice who is near. Live generously. Seek first the kingdom.

Because God knows every Lazarus by name.

This week, can I encourage you to take one step? Ask yourself: who is at my gate? Who is God placing in my path? And then take a small action — a word, a gesture, a gift, a prayer. Because when we open our eyes to the people around us, we step into the joy of God's kingdom.

So may God give us eyes to see, courage to act, and hearts ready to share his love. Amen.

Section 2 – All-Age Adaptations

Object Lessons (3 options)

1. Two Lunchboxes – *A way of introducing the story*

- Show one stuffed with treats (crisps, chocolate, fruit) and one completely empty.
- Ask: "How would you feel if you had this lunchbox... and your friend had that one?"
- Link: In our story today there is a rich man who had more than enough, but Lazarus had nothing. And we are going to think about how important it is to notice when others are in need/

2. A Magnifying Glass / Binoculars – *A way of helping to apply the story*

- Show how these tools help us notice what we'd otherwise miss. Ask children to spot hidden words or small objects around the church.
- Link: The rich man didn't see Lazarus right at his gate. Jesus calls us to open our eyes, notice people, and act with kindness.
- Discuss what are some of the ways, or things we might need to do to help us notice the people and the needs around us?

3. **The Blessing Wall**

- Prepare a big sheet of paper or noticeboard.
- Everyone (children and adults) writes or draws one way they can notice someone in need this week (e.g., sit with someone lonely at school, visit a neighbour, help at the food bank).
- Stick them on the wall as a sign of commitment.
- Leaders can read out a few examples to encourage the whole church.

Prayer Stations (3 ideas)

1. Coins in Water

- A bowl of water with coins nearby.
- People drop a coin in as they pray for those struggling with poverty. The ripples remind us that small actions spread out and make a difference.

2. Bandages and Plasters

- Provide plasters or strips of bandage.
- People write the name of someone sick or hurting, then place it on a cross or prayer board.
- Visual reminder that God heals and cares.

3. Hidden People Post-Its

- A basket of sticky notes.
- People write prayers for "hidden" groups (e.g. carers, those in debt, refugees, those living alone) and place them on an outline of a house or gate.
- Symbolises bringing the unseen into God's presence.

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how _____ felt or I wonder how _____ felt when _____ happened?
- I wonder how you feel about _____?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what the [tree, pearl, coin] could really be?
- I wonder why _____ said _____?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Activities to accompany the service

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.org/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@lectionary resource)

Suggested intercessions

Introduction

Let us pray to God, who knows every Lazarus by name, and who calls us to seek his kingdom of justice, mercy, and peace.

The Church

Loving God,
we pray for your church throughout the world.
Keep us from distraction and self-indulgence,
and help us to live as people of your kingdom.
Open our eyes to those at our gates,
that we may serve the poor, welcome the stranger,
and share your love in word and action.
Bless our bishops, clergy, and all who lead,
that your church may be known for compassion, courage, and generosity.
Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

The World

God of justice,
we pray for nations weighed down by conflict, oppression, and greed.
We lift before you leaders of government and commerce,
that they may use power wisely, seek peace earnestly,
and work for the good of the vulnerable.
We remember those suffering because of war,
those displaced as refugees,
and those facing the daily grind of poverty.
Give us all courage to challenge injustice
and to build a world that reflects your kingdom.
Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

The Community

God of our streets and villages,
we pray for our local community.
Open our eyes to neighbours who are lonely,
families who are stretched,
and those hidden in need.
Bless schools, workplaces, care homes, and shops,
that they may be places of kindness and fairness.
Give us grace to notice the overlooked
and to carry your blessing into the places we live and work.
Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

The Sick

God of compassion,
we bring before you those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit.
For the sick, the weary, the anxious, and the dying.
In silence we name before you those on our hearts...
(pause)
Surround them with your healing presence,
guide those who care for them,
and give hope and strength to all in need.
Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

The Departed and Those Who Mourn

Eternal God,
we remember those who have died in faith,
trusting that you hold them in your everlasting arms.
We pray for those who mourn:
comfort them in their grief,
and assure them of your promise of life eternal.
Help us to live with eyes fixed on your kingdom,
so that when our time comes,
we too may be carried home by your angels.
Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

Thematic Prayer

God of mercy,
you know the people whom the world forgets.
Give us grace to see as you see,
to value the overlooked,
and to live generously in your service.

God of eternity,
you call us to seek first your kingdom.
Set us free from the love of wealth,
the pull of distraction,
and the fear of scarcity.
Teach us to trust you,
to share freely,
and to walk in the way of Christ.

Conclusion

Merciful Father, accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Alternative Litany

Leader: Let us pray to God, who sees the poor and hears the cries of the needy.

Open our eyes, Lord,
to notice those at our gates.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Guide the nations in justice and peace,
and bring hope to the oppressed.

Open our eyes, Lord, to those at our gates.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Bless our homes, schools, and workplaces,
and help us to care for our neighbours.

Open our eyes, Lord, to those at our gates.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Draw near to the suffering and the anxious,
and bring them your healing and peace.

Open our eyes, Lord, to those at our gates.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Gather the faithful departed into your eternal kingdom,
and comfort those who mourn.

Open our eyes, Lord, to those at our gates.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Keep us from distraction and selfishness,
and teach us to seek first your kingdom.

Open our eyes, Lord, to those at our gates.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

**Merciful Father,
accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

Section 4 – Hymns and Songs

Traditional Hymns

1. *All my hope on God is founded*
2. *Brother, sister, let me serve you*
3. *When I needed a neighbour, were you there?*
4. *The kingdom of God is justice and joy*
5. *Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee*
6. *Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart*
7. *Jesu, lover of my soul*
8. *Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts*
9. *Immortal, invisible, God only wise*
10. *O worship the King, all glorious above*

Contemporary Worship Songs

1. *God of Justice (We must go) – Tim Hughes*
2. *Build Your Kingdom Here – Rend Collective*
3. *Here I Am to Worship – Tim Hughes*
4. *Mighty to Save – Reuben Morgan*
5. *10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord) – Matt Redman*
6. *Who You Say I Am – Hillsong*
7. *Open the Eyes of My Heart – Paul Baloche*
8. *Way Maker – Sinach*
9. *Christ Be Magnified – Cody Carnes*
10. *Good Good Father – Pat Barrett / Chris Tomlin*