

## *Reversal of Fortunes: Hear the Cries of the Poor?*

In today's Gospel according to Luke, Jesus is telling a parable to the pharisees describing a rich man life filled with fine clothes, fine food, a mansion - complete with a gate of entry. Jesus contrasts this life with that of an extremely poor man's life filled with misery complete with having to compete with dogs for daily food scraps and a medical condition that left the poor man's skin rife with sores. The ironic thing is that the poor man in the parable lived just outside the rich man's doorway. As the story unfolds, we find that the rich man routinely passed the poor man without even noticing him, helping him, offering food, or assistance in any way. How callused can one man be, right?

Unfortunately, one can see a similar scenario play itself out on the streets of Milwaukee on a daily basis. It is by no means rare to see what appears to be poor (and possibly sick people) on sidewalks and at traffic lights asking for help, yet seldom other people with seemingly better means stops to offer help of any kind. How is this any different than Jesus' parable told in Luke? One could argue that the scenario going on in our lives today is worse. In the parable it is one rich man and one poor man. In today's world it is many people with better means that ignore the need for help from the relatively few poor. This seems to represent a "multiplier effect" on callousness.

Jesus' parable was directed at the pharisees in an attempt to illustrate that their love of wealth is in congruent with love of God which is to say that we can only truly serve one God (Lord Almighty) and that does not include the love of money. To drive home the consequence of loving money over doing God's will, Jesus' parable includes perhaps "the ultimate reversal of fortunes" when the poor man is welcomed into heaven and the rich man is sent to hades - both for eternity! Which seems to beg the question, what if our fortunes were reversed? What if we became the poor asking for help on one of our community's sidewalks or at a stoplight?

How would we imagine the previously poor would treat us? Having been in that position previously one could reasonably believe they would tend to be more generous and be more aware of our plight. Perhaps this is what Jesus is getting at with his parable. Not only does he ask us to imagine that we put ourselves in the shoes of the poor but he asks us what if we spent eternity there? Then would we hear the Cries of the Poor? Perhaps we should ask ourselves (WWJD) What Would Jesus Do?

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