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Thursday of the 2nd Week of Lent

Date: Thursday, March 20, 2025 | **Season:** Lent | **Year:** C
First Reading: Jeremiah 17:5–10
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 1:1–4, 6 | **Response:** Psalm 40:5a
Gospel Acclamation: Luke 8:15
Gospel Reading: Luke 16:19–31
Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House **in the** Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia**.**

Cursed is the one who trusts in human strength alone, who turns away from the Lord. The words of Jeremiah strike like thunder across the centuries. They are not whispered. They are not softened. They are carved into the very rock of history. And they remind us that trust placed in fleeting things—wealth, power, ambition—is trust wasted. Such a person is like a dry, withered bush in the wasteland, clinging to dust while a river flows just beyond its reach.

But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord. Blessed is the one who roots themselves not in the shallow soil of self-reliance, but in the deep, nourishing waters of God's providence. Jeremiah's contrast is stark: one path leads to ruin, the other to life. And the psalmist takes up the same refrain: happy the man who delights in the law of the Lord, who is like a tree planted beside running water, whose leaves never fade, whose fruit never fails.

It is easy to nod at these words, to let them roll over us like waves breaking on stone. But they are not mere poetry; they are prophecy. They cut through our illusions, exposing the choice before us. Where do we plant ourselves? In the shifting sands of this world, or in the firm foundation of God's will? This is the question of Lent. This is the question of our lives.

And then we turn to the Gospel, with its parable of Lazarus and the rich man. A story of reversal, a tale of reckoning. A rich man clothed in purple and fine linen, feasting each day without a care. And at his gate—just at his gate!—a poor man named Lazarus, covered in sores, longing for scraps that never come.

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Here is the great tragedy: the rich man does not send Lazarus away. He does not chase him, curse him, or abuse him. He simply does not see him. He steps over him. He dines lavishly while a human being wastes away at his threshold.

And then—death. And then—the great reversal. Lazarus is carried to the bosom of Abraham, cradled in divine consolation. The rich man? He is in torment. Not because he was wealthy, but because he had allowed his wealth to make him blind. And even now, even in the fires of judgment, he still does not understand. "Send Lazarus to serve me," he pleads. "Send him to warn my brothers." He still sees Lazarus as beneath him, a servant to be dispatched, rather than a brother who suffered beside him.

This is not just a parable. This is an earthquake shaking the foundations of our world. This is the voice of Christ declaring, with terrible clarity, that what we do with our blessings—how we use our resources, our opportunities, our influence—matters before God. This is a warning written not in ink, but in flame.

And what of us? Who are we in this story? We may not dine in palaces, but do we see the Lazarus at our gate? Do we notice the struggling families, the unemployed youth, the exploited workers, the displaced migrants? Here in Zambia, in 2025, we do not need to look far. Inequality is not an abstract idea; it is a reality that also knocks on our door. The choices we make, the causes we support, the generosity we extend—all of these reveal where we have planted our trust: in ourselves, or in God's justice.

In the old Roman Martyrology, today was traditionally the commemoration of St. Photina, the Samaritan woman who met Christ at the well. She, too, had lived in the barren wasteland of misplaced trust—seeking fulfillment in passing relationships, drinking from dry wells that could never satisfy. But then she encountered the Living Water, the one who knew her completely and yet did not condemn her. Her conversion was not passive; she ran to her village, proclaiming Christ. She, once an outcast, became an apostle to her people. Her story is a warning and an invitation: do not let the fountains of grace stand untapped at your feet. Drink deeply. Be transformed.

And St. Archippus, mentioned by Paul in Philemon, was another who understood the cost of discipleship. A disciple of the great Apostle, he was charged to "fulfill the ministry" given to him. Though little is recorded of him, tradition holds

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that he faced persecution for the Gospel, remaining steadfast even as the world turned against him. Like Lazarus, like Photina, he reminds us that faith is not a passive inheritance but a call to action, a summons to stand with the poor, the suffering, the forgotten.

While we keep Pope Francis in our prayers, we ask ourselves:

- Who is the Lazarus at my gate, and how have I failed to see him?
- Where have I placed my trust—in my own strength, or in the living God?
- How is God calling me, this Lent, to let my faith bear fruit in real, tangible acts of justice and mercy?

May we not wait for the grave to open our eyes. May we choose, today, to see. And in seeing, may we act.

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.