

Homily

26th Sunday OT - C

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
September 27-28, 2025

Am 6: 1-7

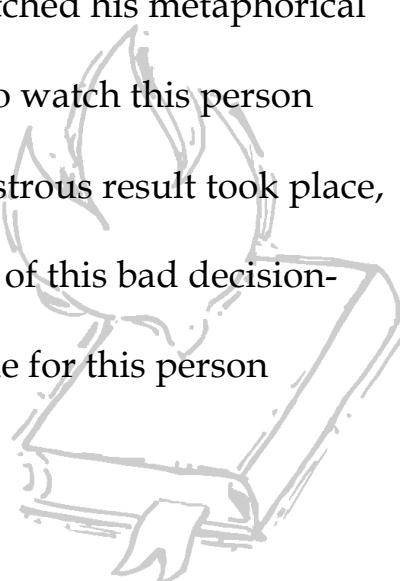
Ps 146: 7, 8-9, 9-10

1 Tm 6: 11-16

Lk 16: 19-31

I had a situation in life when someone who was very close to me, a dear friend, was going through some struggles that I had encountered earlier in my life as well. The person had asked me for counsel and direction, so I explained the similar problem that I had to endure in this particular situation and how I was not successful in resolving this issue. With this sharing, I was hoping that this individual would NOT follow the example of what I did and hopefully find the right path to be at peace.

Unfortunately, this person decided to respond to their struggle the way they wanted to do it, just like I did. As I watched his metaphorical ship sinking, my heart broke. As a result, I had to watch this person falling in a similar way that I did. After this disastrous result took place, I had to help this person deal with the aftermath of this bad decision-making that I once had to endure. My heart broke for this person



because I did not want to see this person suffering and my heart broke because I knew that if they took the same path I did, they would end up with the same result.

In this Sunday's readings, we encounter in the Old Testament a similar catastrophe that fell upon a Chosen People who did not heed the warnings of the prophets over and over and over again. We read from various books of the Old Testament how the prophets tried to warn the Chosen People, how Moses tried to warn people that they needed to follow the law and they needed to follow the teachings of God or the Chosen People would lose what they had. The Chosen People were warned to follow the parameters that God set for them (namely the Ten Commandments and the 603 other rules established in the books of Leviticus and Numbers), but the Chosen People did not want to listen; they did not want to follow God's rules. The people wanted what the people wanted.

As a result, the people fell. Moses warned the people, he told them at the end of Deuteronomy, exactly what was going to happen to them in the future because the Chosen People did not keep their faith in God

and would lose what they had as a result. Nevertheless, people did not listen to Moses' warning and they fell anyway. As we read in our first reading today, Amos warned the Chosen People to follow God in the most intense of ways but the Chosen People did not listen to him. Similarly, Jesus warns us in this gospel reading today that there are consequences to our actions. Do you think we, as a collective society, listened to him? I think about the warning that Father Abraham gave to the rich man who did not follow God's ways and was tormenting in hell because of his disobedience. Abraham tells him, "If the people will not listen to Moses nor the prophets, they certainly will not listen to poor Lazarus" (Luke 16: 19-31).

Today's gospel is but one story of many that warn us to follow the parameters that God sets for us or there will be consequences from our disobedience. This is but one example in the infidelity "loop" that is not cited in any other passage of the bible but is exclusive to this gospel of Luke. In this parable, Jesus references a chasm that exists between heaven and hell. Some theologians would say that eventually all people (including Satan) will end turning to God and being lead up in heaven.

Today's gospel reading says just the opposite. Today's gospel tells us there are consequences to our actions, and if we do not follow the ways of God, then the parable illustrates what will happen to the disobedient person. We also know that this warning is not going to stop people from doing what they are doing, both me and you both. We have to listen to this gospel. We have to follow this gospel. some people just do not want to do what God tells them... or US... to do.

For this reason, perhaps many churches are empty and that is many people have fallen away from God. As today's gospel tells us, a metaphorical chasm will exist between earth and heaven and those who do not follow God's way will be tormented in hell while the poor in wealth (and poor in Spirit) such as Lazarus will find comfort in the next life. That is just the way of faith and the way of life that we have been told over and over again.

Sad to say, even today so many people do not heed the warning and continue to be unfaithful to God, including you and me at times. Today's gospel is a rather stark warning concerning what will happen if we do not live a Christian life, if we do not live a life of love.

As a priest, I ask myself if anyone pays heed to what I preach about this message or whether the message gets ignored by others who parallel those for the last thousands of years or even by me at times. All of this was playing a figurative “bumper cars” in my mind when I received the following letter from one of our faithful on October 13, 2025. This person wrote to me...

Dear Father Pete,

What has helped me to start to pull out of the dark was (your homilies). Your words always seem as though you are speaking directly to me. The homily that hit me the hardest was when you spoke about Charlie Kirk. The anger and hatred I had in my heart for his killer was about as much as I felt about other things. That day you said even though we are sad, we are to love. We are to love our enemies and the ones that hurt us the most. The day I watched and heard Charlie Kirk’s wife forgive her husband’s killer was the day I broke free of my anger. I am to love and not judge, that is what God wants me to do.

A couple of days ago I was listening to a TikTok Real about grief. The person in the reel said it was OK to grieve; we are just not to live in it. We are to walk through the valley, not stay in the valley. Pretty powerful message. Even though some days I feel like I am dragging my feet through the valley, I know I will make it through.

So, finally, I want to say thank you. Thank you, genuinely, thank you! Thank you for your powerful homilies, they have helped me in so many ways to climb out of the darkness.

Sometimes there are people that just want to tear others down for the sake of tear others down and live in the darkness by destroying others because that is the way of the world. If we do not get what we want, we are going to destroy and we are going to go “scorched earth” so that no one is going to be able to survive. That is what we do.

The problem is that when we live this way, when we tear others down like the rich man tore down Lazarus through his actions, then we lose our souls and we lose God’s love. What remains at the end of life is our pleading to God, “Lord, Lord, open the door for us” and God responds, “Amen. It is as if I never knew you” (see Mt 7:21-23; Mt 25: 12;

This is the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus. We encounter two types of people in today’s gospel – those who feel they are entitled and those who have nothing; those who live sumptuously and those who suffer. God makes very clear of what happens to both types if we do not change our ways; this is the warning we are given today.

Sometimes when I talk about the fear of the Lord, I talk about the knees trembling because we are so in love. Sometimes we do have to

talk about our knees trembling out of God's retribution because of what is going to happen if we do not follow God's way. When people tell me how tired they are of hearing this message over and over again, I remind them (and myself) that these words are not mine; they are God's... and as God keeps repeating these warnings through the prophets and through the Father's Son, others and we ourselves just do not want to hear it. That is life.

Nevertheless, God continues to bear down on this message; the question is whether we are we going to heed it. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, the rest of the prophets, Moses and Jesus all say the same things and offer the same message: do good and avoid evil. Follow the gospel, avoid the devil. Do not get caught up in the ways of man but rather follow the ways of love. If we do these things, then God will carry us to the other side.

So we are here today, trying to make sure that we do what is right in God's eyes by taking care of God's children, taking care of you, which is why we make this sacrifice each week in church and through our Mass videos. Currently, we have made over 850 videos preaching this same

message with about 550 subscribers. We are just doing what we can to live the gospel message and preach it as well as we can to all of you. We are very thankful for those of you who have dedicated yourselves to embracing this message.

Let us just make sure we heed that warning and live that gospel message, knowing full well that sometimes people are not going to listen and break our hearts as a result, but we must live and preach the gospel message anyway with the hope that people will change their ways, follow God and find that eternal light. Let us continue to preach this very difficult message for our salvation, and for the salvation of all people that we meet. This is our prayer.