

**“...who would gladly have eaten his fill from the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table.”**

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

**Once upon a time**, in 1950, a committee, representing 17 nations, voted Albert Schweitzer “**The Man of the Century.**” 2 years later, in 1952, Schweitzer received the **Nobel Peace Prize!**

Schweitzer had been acclaimed, the world-over, a multiple genius. He was an outstanding philosopher, a reputable theologian, a respected historian, a concert pianist, and a missionary-medical-doctor.

**BUT**, the most remarkable thing about him was ...his deep, abiding, Christian faith. It was a faith that influenced even the smallest detail of his life.

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*At the age of 21, Schweitzer promised himself that he would enjoy art & science until he was 30. Then he would devote the rest of his life to working among the needy in some form of service.*

*So-o, on his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, on October 13, 1905, he dropped several letters into a Paris mailbox. They were to his parents and closest friends, informing them that he was going to enroll in the university to get a degree in medicine. After that, he was going to Africa to work among the poor, as a medical doctor.*

*The letters created an immediate stir. He says in his book, Out of My Life and Thought:*

**“My relatives and friends all joined in expostulating with me on the folly of my enterprise. I was a man, they said, who was burying the talent entrusted to him.... A lady, who was filled with the modern spirit, proved to me that I could do much more by lecturing on the behalf of medical help for the natives than I could by the action I contemplated.”**

*Nevertheless, Schweitzer stuck to his guns.*

*At the age of 38, he became a full-fledged, medical doctor. At the age of 43, he left for Africa, where he opened a hospital on the edge of the jungle, in what was then called Equatorial Africa. He died there in 1965 at the age of 90.*

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*What motivated Albert Schweitzer to turn his back on worldly fame & fortune to work among the poorest of the poor in Africa?*

*He answers, saying that one of the influences was his meditation on today’s Gospel, which I just read to you from St. Luke, about the rich man and Lazarus. He said:*

**“It struck me as incomprehensible that I should be allowed to live such a happy life, while so many people around me were struggling with...suffering!”**

*And this brings me to the Gospel story itself.*

**‘What, actually, WAS the sin of the rich man in today’s gospel?’ you ask.  
Well—I am glad you asked that question!**

*The sin of the rich man was **NOT** that he ordered Lazarus from his property.*

*It was **NOT** that the rich man kicked Lazarus or shouted obscenities at him as he passed him.*

*The sin of the rich man was simply that he **never even NOTICED** him. He accepted Lazarus as a part of the ‘landscape of life.’*

*He accepted, without question, the fact that Lazarus was poor and he, himself, was rich.*

*The sin of the rich man was NOT a sin of **commission**—doing something he shouldn't have done.  
The sin of the rich man was a sin of **OMISSION**—NOT doing something he **SHOULD** have done!*

*The sin of the rich man was basking in his own wealth and NOT **lifting a finger**... to help poor Lazarus in his dire need!*

*The sin of the rich man is the same sin that is being committed over and over today...not only because of what it is doing to the poor, **BUT** because of what it is doing to the fabric of society. You see, the lack of genuine concern for the poor is destroying, **not only the poor, BUT** the rest of us... as true human beings...as true Christians! We do nothing, or at best, very little...and we should be ashamed!*

*JFK put it this way:*

***“If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.”***

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*Today's Gospel is an invitation to do what Schweitzer did. It is an invitation to meditate on the story of the rich man and Lazarus; to ask ourselves the same question Schweitzer asked himself:*

***“How can I live a happy life while so many other people are suffering?”***

*General Dwight D. Eisenhower put it this way:*

***“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger & are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed!”***

*It's an invitation to take to heart... the words of Jesus in today's Gospel.*

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*I now close with these words of Pope, St. John Paul II, spoken at Yankee Stadium on Oct. 2, 1979:*

***“We cannot stand idly by, enjoying our riches and freedom, if in any place the Lazarus of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (now, the Lazarus of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century) stands at our door.***  
***In the light of the parable of Christ, riches and freedom mean a special responsibility.  
Riches and freedom create a special obligation.***  
***And so, in the name of the solidarity that binds us together in a common humanity,  
I again proclaim the dignity of every human person.***  
***The rich man and Lazarus are both human beings:  
Both equally created in the image and likeness of God,  
Both equally redeemed by Jesus Christ at a great price,  
...the price of his own precious blood!***  
***The poor of the United States and of the world are your brothers and sisters in Christ.  
You must never be content to leave them just the crumbs of the feast.***  
***You must take of your substance, and not just of your abundance, in order to help them.  
And you must treat them like guests ...guests at your family table.”***

*May our gracious, ever-generous, Abba-God bless you,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.*