

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus.

Luke 16:19–20



To paraphrase the historian Diarmaid MacCulloch, one of the most striking things about the Gospels is the way in which “the rich and the beautiful people” are largely sidelined, and the poor and marginalized people’s everyday encounters with God are in the forefront. He argues this is a rare—indeed, almost unique—aspect of these ancient texts.

This uniqueness is captured nicely in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. When reading the story closely, you may notice that almost unlike any other space in society, it is the rich man who goes nameless, and it is the beggar outside his door whose name we learn and whose experience of suffering and redemption we follow closely.

In learning to see the world through Gospel eyes, we need to pay attention to whose names we know. So many of us know not only the names but also intimate details about the lives of the rich and beautiful people of the world—celebrities, royalty, athletes—yet we may have a hard time calling to mind the names of the people we pass every day on the street or even the full names of cleaning staff we’ve worked beside for years. The people whose names we care to learn tell us who we consider to be at the center of God’s unfolding story, and the Gospels have a very particular perspective on this.

Today’s readings

Psalms 1 | Jeremiah 17:5–10 | Luke 16:19–31

Whose experiences and struggles do you pay attention to, and how might this perspective align or diverge from the Gospel’s focus on those often overlooked by society?