



# The Inclusive Community

**Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Luke 16:19-31**

**Theme: Compassion**

**September 26, 2010**

**Homily of Mary Scaine**

Our Entrance song today "Rich Man-Poor Man" believe it or not was written by Bob Miller in 1932. Many of us here today were not even considered to be a gleam in our parent's eyes when this song was written. Yet its message is as relevant today as it was back then in the depression. As the old saying goes, "the more things change, the more they remain the same."

In reflecting on the readings of today, (The Rich Man-Poor Man theme) I listened to the promptings of the Cosmic Spirit who nudges us forward to new possibilities. In Luke 16: 19-31, I attempted to see it through the lens of a new story, a modern application. A story that **evolves** out of chaos. It is out of the **chaos** of our everyday life comes the **creativity** to make changes.

In my being creative, the first thing that came to mind was the theme of today the word **compassion**. What does the word compassion mean? Jesus spoke Aramaic and came from the Wisdom tradition which is deeply rooted in the Book of Psalms, Sirach (also known in Greek as Ecclesiasticus) and the Song of Songs.

Therefore my creative instinct prompted me to look up the Aramaic translation of compassion. Compassion, is derived from the verb *rakham* as "love, have compassion." *rekham*, also means "womb." In Psalm 110:3 the word is used metaphorically in the expression "the womb of the dawn," referring to the earliest light that will give rise to the dawn. The beginning of creation/universe....

In this parable many scholars believe that Jesus is drawing upon a popular Jewish folk tale that had roots in Egypt about a rich man and poor man whose lots after death are completely reversed.

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COMPASSION

MARY SCAINE

First, Jesus paints a quick portrait of the rich man, a very, very rich man. He was dressed in Purple. (One of my favorite colors) and George's too! Purple dye back then was extremely expensive; it was obtained from the shellfish murex. A purple wool mantle therefore was very costly. A finely-woven linen tunic was considered the height of luxury. Jesus portrays a picture of a rich man living opulently. The rich man is not named, though he is sometimes called Dives, the Latin word for "rich man."

Jesus contrasts the rich man with a beggar, the poorest of the poor. The beggar's name is Lazarus, the only character in any of Jesus' parables who is given a name and of course Abraham. Lazarus is short for Eleazar, which means "He whom God helps," He is lying at a suitable place for begging, next to the rich man's gate, probably placed there by his friends. He is sick, as evidenced by his numerous ulcerated sores. And he is hungry, longing to eat the scraps from the rich man's table, usually reserved for the dogs. Jesus pictures angels carrying Lazarus to Abraham's bosom. So this puts Lazarus in the place of honor at the banquet table. Thus the tables are reversed.

How can we relate to and write our version of the parable of the rich man poor man as it plays out in our daily lives.

Here are **Three** scenarios to Ponder:

1. In American politics today this theme is played out in both the House of Representatives and in the Senate.  
Being **rich** can buy you a seat in **both** houses.  
Being **middle-class** or **poor** can place your house in foreclosure.
2. In pursuit of the American dream today, **being** a **poor** immigrant who lands on our shores or crosses our borders their hopes and dreams of living the American may be dimmed.
3. In pursuit of religious freedom its interpretation is questioned as to whether you have the right to worship or build a place of worship, be that in a synagogue, a church or mosque/center.

Which scenario can you relate to in this new story and how can it play out in the ongoing chaos of your everyday life?

In closing, let me tell you a story about a preacher and a New York taxi driver who arrived at the pearly gates and were greeted by St. Peter. To cut it short, the taxi driver is richly rewarded while the preacher just squeaks in. Why? When the preacher prayed, the people slept. But when the taxi driver drove, people prayed.