



St. Matthew's Church, Kingfisher Lake
First Nation
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SOMETHING WE CAN'T AFFORD TO MISS

■ This year, an accident of the church calendar meant that we missed a crucial gospel text: the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). The gospel was bumped because the feast of St. Michael and All Angels happened on the Sunday for which it was scheduled. Though I love the feast and heard a very good sermon that day, the message of this gospel text is one that our souls cannot afford to miss, especially in this time in which we live.

The story gives insight into a number of things that are important for us. The most urgent item has to do with the way things and the acquisition of things can make the poor invisible to us.

This is a solemn warning from Jesus. We may describe this inundation with things as a dangerous spiritual sickness. Today, it is clear that this spiritual sickness has infected us, not only as individuals but as a society and, sadly, as a church.

The Bible, again and again, describes our attitude to the poor as a reliable indication of the quality of our relationship with God. Jesus makes this a central element of gospel living. We cannot claim to have fully received the gospel and its freedom unless we have eyes to see the poor. Jesus goes so far as to say that when we encounter the poor, we encounter him (Matthew 25:31-46). If we wish to find him, that is where we should look. Both close at hand and far away, to

know the poor, to see them, is to know and see Jesus.

It has been a while since our churches have made a significant, widespread effort to see and respond to poverty. May God bless those who have resisted this trend. In most areas across the country, we have developed a way of being church that cannot exist in areas of moderate income levels, to say nothing of areas with a great amount of poverty. This has been true in Indigenous communities for decades, where congregations that are vital to the challenging circumstances of poverty have survived on the sacrificial ministry of unpaid clergy. This failure to see the poor on our doorstep, in so many contexts, is something for which we will have to, sooner or later, give an account.

For those of us who live in wealth and comfort, the crisis of poverty, local and global, is an urgent political, moral and spiritual issue. The number of people living in poverty is growing, increasing with the impacts of greedy overconsumption by the well-off, climate injustice around the world and a growing migration crisis (also fuelled by climate injustice).

Our capacity to see the poor in our day is one of the great moral challenges of our time. The quality of our church's spiritual life depends on our response to this challenge—and the future of our global community and planet also depends upon it. ■