

Mr Burton Smythe is on holiday in the city and is staying at the 5 star Ritz Hotel. On his second morning, his bedroom phone rings. Burton picks it up and the hotel operator says to him, "Mr. Smythe, I have a Marvin Jones on the line who says he's your brother-in-law. He wants to talk to you urgently." "Please put him through," says Burton. "Burton, I need your help," cries Marvin. "I'm in trouble with the IRS. They say I owe them \$25,000 and if I don't pay them by the end of the day, they will sue me. But I don't have enough money in my bank. Could you please send them \$25,000 on my behalf right away?" "What was that? I can't hear you Marvin," says Burton, "I think we have a bad connection" "Burton!" shouts Marvin, "I desperately need you to send me \$25,000 right away." "I'm sorry Marvin," says Burton, "bad connection. I still can't hear you." "But Mr. Smythe," interrupts the hotel operator, "I can very clearly hear Mr. Jones." "Then why don't you help Mr. Jones and you send him the \$25,000?"

Connections ...

- I spent some time at the beginning of this past week reflecting on what could be the connection between what I talked about last Sunday and this parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

What possible connection could there be???

- many, many things have been written and said about this particular parable scholars have constructed learned articles and filled journals trying to explain, understand, illuminate
- in the end I did come up with a link

And the simple point I make this morning is that the Rich Man missed the connection

- he missed the connection between his life and Lazarus's life the Rich Man lived as if Lazarus made no difference

This Rich Man did not actively harm Lazarus

- he did not abuse him or call him names he didn't even have him removed
- the Rich Man just carried on Lazarus lived his life and the Rich Man lived his

Now, Lazarus did not seem to do anything particularly deserving of merit

- the Rich Man did not seem to do anything particularly deserving of punishment however there is a connection that the Rich Man missed
- that he completely overlooked that he totally failed to be aware of

We are told that Lazarus was brought to the gate of the Rich Man's house

- Lazarus was brought to the gate of the Rich Man's house those are perhaps the most telling, the most damning, words
- Lazarus was at the Rich Man's gate and the Rich Man did ...
... nothing

This Rich Man was supposed to notice Lazarus

- and do something in response something that helped Lazarus, something that made Lazarus's life better

The Rich Man could easily have done this

- he had the resources and the ability
he would not even have had to do anything himself - he had servants
- however the Rich Man did nothing
he did not even seem to notice poor Lazarus
and that is where things went off the rails for him

Carrying on from my talking last week

- let's look at this from a community rather than an individual basis
and in doing so I ask a question that I do not yet have answers to
but which it seems to me Jesus puts before us today through this parable

Allow me to put it like this

- the Rich Man and Lazarus are connected
but the Rich Man lives as if they are not
- we who gather here at Christ the King Mangawhai
are connected ... connected to the community, the people, the situations
at the bottom of our driveway
- so the question becomes:
who or what is the Lazarus at our gate?

Who or what is the Lazarus at our gate???

I recognise that we may not feel particularly 'rolling in resources'

- however as the people of God who gather in this place, we are blessed
we have things, skills, experience, ability, time
that we can use to enhance the life of a Lazarus

Let's just leave that for a moment as a work in progress – and keep it before us

- and continue on the theme of 'being connected'
last Sunday I talked about St John's Cathedral in Hong Kong
- one of the ways they acknowledge a practical connection
with the community that surrounds their building
is through their noticeboard in the porch
- it is a big noticeboard, you can't miss it as you walk through
and there, in black and white, for people to read
is this "Welcome to St John's Cathedral" [hold up]

It is a welcome which connects people to this particular building

- to the current local Christian community
and to the wider Christian life
- it talks about their history and their heritage
it gives an invitation, and it is very well done

This is some of what it says:

For the past 170 years, Christian worship has been offered on the site ...

Pause a moment and gaze through the doors down the aisle to the window at the far end. It depicts Jesus Christ on the Cross. If there is any one symbol that stands for Christianity, it is the Cross. Found now throughout the world, it was not always so. Christianity has its origins in an obscure country in the Middle East.

A Jew, Jesus of Nazareth, spent about three years wandering around his home countryside, teaching, healing and welcoming people, many of them disenfranchised and side-lined. A small number of people joined him and became known as his 'Disciples'. However, Jesus also stirred up opposition against him. He was arrested and executed on a wooden cross. There it should have ended.

But within a matter of days, a remarkable rumour swept through the city of Jerusalem. Jesus, put to death on a cross, was alive! That belief, above all others, is the starting point of Christianity and the Church. Some find it too ridiculous for words; some find it scandalises them; but for countless millions of people throughout the world, over the past two thousand years, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ has been, and still is the central article of their faith.

Belief in one God, revealed to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Creator, Redeemer, and Life-Giver), has called into being the Christian Church. The Church is a remarkable collection of very ordinary people (the living stones) drawn from every walk of life, brought together by the common belief that Jesus calls us to follow him. Sunday by Sunday, this Cathedral is filled several times over as people come to worship God in English, Mandarin and Filipino. Daily services of the Eucharist are offered as we pray for those in this city going about the business of living.

St John's Cathedral stands within the Anglican/Episcopalian tradition of Christianity. During the daytime, the doors are open — all are invited to come in and find peace — to pray, sit, or simply to be quiet for a few moments in the midst of the bustle and noise of this city. You are welcome too.

As you see from this notice board and a quick look around the buildings in the precinct, St John's is a busy place reaching many different people. Should you wish to speak to someone, the staff in the Cathedral Office will know who to direct you towards.

Pause now for a moment and be aware of the love of God for you.

Peace be with you.

I think that's brilliant

- outlining briefly and clearly the story of our shared faith and the place of this particular Christian community
- and I especially warm to three special sentences:
 - “you are welcome too”
 - “pause now for a moment and be aware of the love of God for you”
 - “peace be with you”
- what caring and comforting words – there is a place for everyone a place right here

I'm pretty sure we could do something like that

- and put it in a prominent place where it will be noticed by people who visit here or use our facilities
- a great way of connecting with people sharing who we are, what we stand for, why we are here and inviting people to find their place here too

Also on the noticeboard at St John's Cathedral Hong Kong

- is a recognition of the very troubled situation the city is living in at present and a prayer for the city and people
- plus an invitation to do something practical to help resolve this trouble an invitation to gather one night a week in the hall
- whatever people's background or spiritual tradition, belief or lack of belief kind of like: all who love our city and our people and desire things to be right gather to add our energy and prayers for a positive outcome

They also recognise that there is a wider world out there

- and they invite people to pray this prayer as they read the noticeboard

*Compassionate God and Father of all,
we are horrified at violence in so many parts of the world.
It seems that none are safe and some are terrified.
Hold back the hands that kill and maim;
turn around the hearts that hate.
Grant instead your strong Spirit of Peace -
the peace that passes our understanding but changes lives,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

In our Pew News/Pew Sheet we have a 'Prayer Cycle'

- which is good, which reminds us to pray for particular things on a regular basis but perhaps it is a bit 'rote'
- and I wonder if on our "public noticeboard" we could also have a prayer in response to something that is happening in our community now, this week, this month
- what is going on that we can support and encourage?
is there anything we need to highlight and speak about?
- and maybe do this at least monthly ...

We are looking for connections

- looking to make connections, recognise connections
help others to make connections

I will do some work on a "Welcome to Christ the King/All Saints"

- that we could use on a "public noticeboard"

The question I took from the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

- I invite us all to continue reflect on:
"who or what is the Lazarus at our gate?"
- and please, let's share what we come up with
so that as the people of God who gather in this place
we can make the connection and do something lifegiving

Amen.