

**ANGLICAN CHAPLAINCY OF ALL SAINTS' MARSEILLE
WITH AIX-EN-PROVENCE AND THE LUBERON**

Sermon – Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

28th September 2025

All Saints' Marseille

Jane Quarmby, Licensed Lay Minister

Last weekend I bought a lottery ticket and was persuaded by the shopkeeper to take another one for 3 euros which would put me into a special national draw which would give me the chance to win 20 million euros. I duly invested my extra 3 euros on the basis that it would be wonderful to win all that money and promptly forgot all about it.

But this week, I began to think – “what would I do with all that money”? There’s no mortgage on the house, my car works fine, I have a comfortable life and enjoy my retirement from paid work. What would you do with 20 million euros? What guidance comes from God on this in our readings?

They all stress that God has already provided us with everything we need, and so it’s up to us to do good with what we have been given – be rich in good works, generous and ready to share. This would be an investment in our future life.

Luke gives a graphic example of the dangers of being rich, of loving money, with his story of poor Lazarus. Jesus doesn’t say that being rich is in itself a bad thing, but it all depends on how we use wealth. We would hope that if we found someone like Lazarus, ill, covered in sores, unable to feed himself, filthy and homeless lying outside our homes, that we would help him. We wouldn’t be enjoying ourselves eating,

drinking, and living the high life without a thought for the suffering right outside our doors. In our developed part of the world, we have organisations to deal with our Lazarus's so we might call an ambulance, get social services involved, refer him to the benefits office or perhaps give him money for somewhere to sleep and food. Part of our taxes cover the social care aspects of our lives. Or would we be tempted to call the police to have him moved along?

Every city in our developed world has beggars. They can be outside churches, railway stations, in the streets. Too often there is a ragged bundle of blankets and carrier bags in a doorway, which is all the possessions a rough sleeper has. Sometimes there will be someone in them, who can't cope with the world. They might be drug addicts or alcoholics, taking refuge in oblivion or just unlucky. Often, they have a dog with them – which is normally in a much better condition than its owner, providing some security and unconditional love. Dogs are no longer regarded as filthy vermin, as they were in Lazarus's day. Do we pass by, expecting the authorities to deal with the embarrassment of these people.? Do we try and help? Even just a hot coffee on a cold winter's day, as I saw a young man in Aix giving to a line of beggars outside the cathedral once. Personal, practical help.

And what of the Lazarus's in other countries around the world, where there is no social services or benefits structure but here is a big divide between rich and poor.

Jesus describes what happens to the abject creature outside the rich man's gate once he has passed through his miserable painful life - he is carried by the angels to the messianic banquet in the kingdom of God where he will be happy and cared for, pain-free. But the rich man who also dies, has already had his share of the good life and goes to the

place of the dead where he is tormented. No longer dressed in the finest clothes money can buy, feasting on the best food and wine available, he is in hell. But he hasn't lost his imperious disregard for Lazarus – he shouts to Abraham to send Lazarus to help him. As though Lazarus is a mere lackey. But there is too wide a gulf for any help to be sent to him. And so, he begs for his family to be warned of the danger they are in, so they don't end up like him. But God has already sent endless warnings from Moses through a long line of prophets – the writing was on the wall but ignored. As would be the final warning or alarm call from the one who rose from the dead – Jesus.

It's a very stern story.

It made me think about this whole question of wealth and how we use it. If we are selfish and greedy, hiding in our shell against the horrors of the world outside as is graphically illustrated by an advertisement for a charity on Irish tv at the moment. It opens with two photos side by side. One is of lush green, fertile Irish countryside with animals grazing, the other of a dry, devastated landscape ravaged by war. The voiceover says – not our country. But it goes on to say that it may not be our country, but it is still our problem – our duty, to give generously to feed the starving, heal the sick, help the homeless. We are urged to give a small monthly donation. If all of the well-off gave a little, it would change lives dramatically.

What does this mean for the billionaires of the world? The superrich? I began with wondering what I would do with 20 million and then began to wonder what they do with their billions. Do they sit on it like a broody hen and hatch yet more billions? And risk eternal suffering in the next life, if they even think about what next? So, I looked a few up and the numbers were staggering. For example, Warren Buffet has

donated 62 billion dollars to various charitable causes, out of a net worth of 133 billion. He hasn't left himself in a penniless state but 62 billion goes a long way in relieving suffering. Bill and Melissa Gates have so far donated nearly 48 billion in very focused ways, concentrating on reducing inequity in 3 areas – health, climate change and education. Bill Gates states “I believe that people who are financially successful have a responsibility to give back to society.” He is busy giving away virtually all of his wealth before he dies. He also states, “Private markets do a great job of responding to the needs of people in wealthier countries, but they don't serve the needs of the poor because there's no profit to be made.”

He and a number of other billionaires are using their vast wealth to do good. We could always argue that they could happily donate more – but then perhaps so could we. Instead of donating food to the Resto du Coeur once a year at harvest – we could do it every month. We could increase our charitable giving; we could give our time to helping others. There's always more that we can do as individuals and as a church. Jesus said that the poor would always be with us, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be moved by the media coverage of starving children in Gaza and do our best to help.

If I do win that 20 million – think how many Lazarus's it would help. Or 5 euros a month to UNICEF if I don't win.