

<sup>19</sup> “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. <sup>20</sup> And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, <sup>21</sup> who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. <sup>22</sup> The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup> In Hades, where he was being tormented, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. <sup>24</sup> He called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames.’ <sup>25</sup> But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things and Lazarus in like manner evil things, but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. <sup>26</sup> Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’ <sup>27</sup> He said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house— <sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.’ <sup>29</sup> Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’ <sup>30</sup> He said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ <sup>31</sup> He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’ ”

Jesus calls us to recognize and honor the dignity of every human being — for two closely related reasons.

First, each of us is the Beloved of God. Period. God's unrelenting love gives every human being eternal worth. Jesus urges us to *recognize that reality* in each person we meet.

Second, we ourselves can only truly experience being Beloved when another human being sees us that way. Only a *somebody* can recognize another *somebody*.

If we look at everyone else as a nobody, then — in a very real sense — there's nobody there to see *us*. We become invisible to ourselves.

In what may seem like a paradox, we come to know ourselves as the Beloved *only when we also recognize others as the Beloved*. How we see others becomes a spiritual habit.

And spiritual habits have an eternal trajectory.

I thought about some parallels to our current world and somehow focused on "Into the Unknown," from *Frozen II*. I think these two share powerful themes of facing a calling that leads to a profound reversal of fortune. Both narratives challenge the characters to leave their current state of comfort and confront an unknown truth, with significant consequences for refusing or embracing that journey.

| Theme              | <i>Into the Unknown</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| <b>The Call</b>    | Queen Elsa hears a mysterious voice summoning her beyond the familiar walls of her home, Arendelle. It is an irresistible call to leave her comfort and discover the truth about herself and her kingdom's past.                                                                                  | The rich man and his family have "Moses and the Prophets"—the scriptures—which serve as a constant call from God to care for the poor and the marginalized. The beggar, Lazarus, physically represents this call, lying at the rich man's gate every day. |
| <b>The Refusal</b> | Elsa's initial reaction is to resist the voice. She is "spoken for" by the life she has built in Arendelle and fears that answering the call will cause her to lose the love she has found. She tries to ignore the ringing in her ears.                                                          | The rich man repeatedly ignores the call for help represented by Lazarus. He is a "lover of money," indifferent to Lazarus's suffering and focused on his own luxurious life, failing to see the invisible poor man at his gate.                          |
| <b>The Journey</b> | As Elsa follows the voice into the unknown, she travels north toward the magical river Ahtohallan. The journey forces her to confront the painful history of her people and the sins of her grandfather. The path is dangerous but ultimately leads to a transformative moment of self-discovery. | The journey begins after death. While Lazarus is carried by angels to a place of comfort, the rich man, after living a life of comfort, finds himself in a place of torment in Hades.                                                                     |

### **The Reversal of Fortune**

Elsa's quest leads to her giving up her position as Queen of Arendelle. In doing so, she discovers her true identity as the "fifth spirit" and becomes a bridge between the natural world and her people. This loss of her old status is actually her ultimate triumph.

The parable presents a stark reversal. Lazarus, who suffered in life, receives comfort and dignity in death, resting at Abraham's side. The rich man, who lived in luxury, is tormented and humiliated.

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### **The Immovable Chasm**

For Elsa, the climax of her journey involves traveling "too far" into the glacial river and turning to ice. Her journey can only be completed by her sister Anna's righteous act of tearing down the dam, which represents destroying the sins of the past. This shows that she cannot cross into the unknown alone; a bridge must be built.

A central element of the story is the "great chasm" fixed between the saved and the lost after death. There is no crossing over, no second chance. Abraham tells the rich man that if his brothers won't listen to God's word in life, they won't be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.

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The most profound connection lies in the final point of the parable. Abraham states that if people do not listen to the scriptures, they will not believe "even if someone rises from the dead".

This line was a direct and pointed challenge from Jesus to the Pharisees, the "lovers of money" he was addressing. The gospel of Luke is written for a community that already knows the end of the story—that Jesus himself, the Word made flesh, will rise from the dead. Yet, many still refuse to believe. The parable forces listeners to examine their own response to the "call" they've already received. It is not about judging the rich or the poor but about confronting one's own spiritual indifference.

Similarly, Elsa's journey is a call to confront past sins and rectify injustices for the sake of the future. Both narratives suggest that genuine repentance and transformation are not born from a dramatic sign or a magical call, but from the willingness to heed the truth that is already available.

In our scripture today we see a powerful situation of role reversal. The world is turned upside-down or rather, right side up. Mary sang about a situation like this in Magnificat. The poor are filled with good things, and the rich are sent away hungry. The powerful are brought down and the lowly are lifted up.

Jesus didn't question how the rich man got his money or that he had it. The rich man wasn't even necessarily a bad man. He might have been a deeply caring man who was dismayed by unemployment and inflation figures, or he might have been a generous donor to charitable causes. Regardless of whatever else he was, in this story he was blind to the person in need who was sitting outside his gate.

The Bible clearly states that all people, created in the image of the eternal God, will be alive somewhere forever-either in the presence of Almighty God, enjoying endless fellowship with him, or in the torment of hell. These are the only two possibilities.

Jesus' primary objective in this story was not to teach the details of the afterlife but to expose how the Pharisees were misusing the life they already had, an ostentatious, outward religion that had no lasting, inward reality. Jesus teaches that the more we have, the more responsibility we bear for society.

Do we have people who can be prophets to us, who can convict us, rebuke us, teach us, and point us to a life that is worth living? The answer is yes; it is not unknown. There are many people like Lazarus around us. We have a chance to learn from the Lazaruses of our world.

We are called on to confront the reality that every day we know of people who are in desperate need. Jesus is inviting us to step through the gate of knowledge and radical love into the kingdom of God, where God's will for justice and peace is done, as we say in the Lord's Prayer, "on earth as in heaven."

Here are questions we might ask:

- How do we treat others, and especially those in need?
- Are we even willing to see them, to acknowledge them, to allow their claims on us as fellow human beings and children of God to make a demand on our lives?

No matter what terrible things happen in this life, you have the promise of God's Word and Jesus-Way. Nothing in this world will be able to separate you from the love of God. Because God's mercy endures forever as we live into the unknown. AMEN