

"If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets,
neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead."

It is said we live in the Age of Reason – no longer of Faith. The dominant attitude is: doubt things until you can prove them rationally or experimentally. No wooden nickels. It maintains intellect over fantasy. Be skeptical.

Ever since this trend began – well since the late 1500's in Europe – faith has eroded among many. How do you prove God exists or that Christ was divine or that there are angels or that there is a heaven hereafter. How can you believe in the real presence of Christ in bread and wine. Such ideas are beyond calculation. Ethics is an optional choice; no need to worry about cheating, lying – indeed such behavior may even be the rational road to take if you want to be a success in this material world. And it is indeed material; there is no such thing as a Holy Spirit.

Today's parable presents us with just such a fellow – skeptic, unbridled by any moral code, any fear of retribution. Rationally speaking, when you're dead, you're dead. The Big Sleep – no pain, no remorse, no sadness over the people you cheated, the lives you ruined. The rich man has no concern for Lazarus, a leper who begs at the gate of his estate. He's too preoccupied with the bounty of his dining hall and his ways and means of accumulating more than he'd ever need in one lifetime. Disease? That's somebody else's problem – and by all means don't tax my wealth to deal with it! And so on.

Except when this rich man (let's call him Dives which means "rich" in Latin) dies he finds out there is a kind of life after death – that his intellect had let him down. And he longs to let his equally skeptical brothers know that there is more to reality than what a rational mind can calculate – there are dimensions captured in words like heaven and love and "Abraham's bosom" and a world *created*, not *just* the consequence of some big bang. He begins to believe that poetry has as much if not more to say than scientific formulae. That life is more than inhaling until you stop.

The moral of the parable is: don't get stuck in a faithless way of being – keep an open mind. Thank God for science – at least most of it, because some of the products of lucrative science could destroy our globe – but view the wonders of science as an enticement to faith – for the true scientist is more a believer than we think. And as usual, let me refer to a popular song that keeps faith alive sometimes more than our Church does. Remember:

*You've gotta have heart / All you really need is heart
/ When the odds are sayin' you'll never win / That's when the grin should start // You've gotta
have heart / Miles 'n miles n' miles of heart / Oh, it's fine to be a genius of course / But keep that
old horse / Before the cart / First you've gotta have heart.*

As one scholar puts it: "The two failures of Dives belong together; because his mind was closed to the revelation of God, his heart was closed to the demands of compassion." All mind? Then no heart! Inhuman.

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