

## MARCH 5, 2026 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

Very appropriate readings for the Lenten season, and it's all summed up, the psalm often is there in the middle and it kind of gives us the theme of the readings, and happy are those who hope in the Lord.

The psalm is really about the two ways. Am I coming to God or am I going away from God? And coming to God can be, it's the orientation of our lives, and there can be dramatic changes in the orientation and especially if someone has a major conversion. But usually, it's a gradual. The people that are more and more stuck in the material and especially in a consumeristic world and so on, or they gradually come more to God, so they come through life. But it's the fundamental option we have. The fundamental choice.

And even Jeremiah is the first reading written 2,500 years ago, he starts off right at the beginning saying that cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength. Those who trust in their own strength, they will be doomed. And we can see that on the political scale, too. Especially with dictators and so on, how they fall. People who thought they had the strength and they trusted in themselves. And I'm just thinking because almost a year ago, Bashar al-Assad from Syria, he got this little flight quickly to Russia to be safe, but someone who also trusted in his strength and not God's strength.

But it's something we have to learn along in life. As I was praying with these readings, I had to think of a family member who today, she's in her mid-40s and she's well-adjusted. But when she was eight years old, and it's a beautiful analogy of that disposition. When she was eight years old, she upped one on her brother and we went for a walk, and she's skipping along and saying, "I'm so smart, I'm so smart, I'm so smart," and as she

was skipping along, she ran into the railing of a bridge and she cried her head off, of course.

But this is also what happens to us. If you're not careful with your life, if you think you're smart. If you think that the world will give us safety, then things will happen. And also, I'm sometimes with retreatants. All the people who come and see me, how, when they are especially a little bit older, in their 50s or 60s, and they have to come to terms with their life. Maybe a life of comfort and a life of broken relationships and so on and wondering what went wrong? What went wrong? And often, it is because they were sucked into the world into having a nice little lifestyle just like the TV likes to portray in family shows and so on and we can get caught, and it's so easy, but it can be so destructive.

A proper house is built on the proper foundation, and as we look at the house when the house is built on an apartment building, at least half of the time is spent on building the foundation before you see anything coming above the ground. And this is also in the spiritual life. We have to build a proper foundation, and that takes usually the first half of our lives as we're trying to find a way through life. But when we have a proper foundation, then we will also be able to build a deep relationship with God and, of course, it's a two-way street. God is always there with love and reaching out, but we have to act too.

And so, in a gospel reading about the rich man and Lazarus, it's all brought together. Of course, the rich man who is stuck in his own riches and who cannot see the poverty around him, and who really, he probably might have known about Lazarus, but Lazarus is just something was lying by the gate. It's not important. Lazarus is no better than a dog next door. And because he's blinded, and so many of us in our society are also blinded by our riches, by our wealth, by our possessions. And it's

unbelievable how many people of us are stuck in the possessions and what the world has to offer.

And Lent is the time to look back inward. Am I going more towards the world or am I moving more to God? Is the shopping mall becoming more important in my life, or is God more important? Are my possessions? Am I a hoarder? Are my possessions more important than anything else? And so many relationships are also lost over this kind of attitude.

But it starts usually very early on in life, but if the more we are spiritually poor, the more we also can listen to God. And obviously Lazarus, as he lied in his poverty by the gate, no doubt he prayed many times to God for God to assist him, for the next piece of bread to get and so on. And this is the mystery of our faith.

And we also can see that in the saints, like I am thinking of St. Bernadette Soubirous. Little St. Bernadette, who Our Lady of Lourdes appeared to. She was living in pure poverty. She was actually, in worldly terms, not that smart, but she knew she had to rely on God. Total innocent relying on God, and God obviously did great things through her.

And so, this is as time to look inwards and to take stock during Lent of our spiritual journey with God.

Amen.