What gives us our Christian identity?
   Is it only trying to avoid actual sin?
   Sins of commission
Or is there more?
   Do we ever think of sins of omission?
   Not doing things we ought to do
Our readings continue the theme of stewardship from last week
   But today also have a special challenge for us
   We are called to find an honest balance
This balance is seen in the virtue of temperance
   Not the idea of temperance from the days of prohibition
   A total rejection of this or that
   But the virtue of temperance
   A virtue of moderation
This is our guide for our role of steward
   As stewards we are here to care for creation
   To care for ourselves
   And to care for those that cannot care for themselves
Amos describes what not to do in our 1st reading
   Remember from last week
   He is a successful businessman from the south
   Sent to prophesize to the north
Woe to the complacent in Zion

This is one of the gravest warnings in the Old Testament

Basically he is saying

Damned be the complacent

Lying on beds of ivory

Eating calves and lambs

At a time when these were valuable commodities

Lambs were used for their wool

Calves to add to a herd

So rather than sacrificing today for future generations

So they were sacrificing tomorrow’s wealth

For today’s comfort and leisure

Drinking from bowls

Not sipping from cups

Using the best oils to anoint and perfume themselves

They are ignoring the condition of their brothers and sisters

While they gorge themselves

There was no limit to their spending on their luxuries

But they wouldn’t lift a finger to help those in need

Amos warns them

They will be conquered by their enemies

Driven into exile for their sins
Our rich man in the Gospel is complacent as well

He is unnamed

But the poor man is identified

Jesus gives a description of both men’s lifestyle

The rich man

Fine purple garments

To color clothing purple was very expensive in those days

Dining sumptuously each day

This man was not living temperance

He was not enjoying fine food and drink occasionally

This was his everyday life

Lazarus

Lying at his door

Covered with sores

Not a leper; or he would not have been allowed to be near another

Wanting nothing more than the scraps that fell to the floor

Dogs would come and lick his sores

And more than likely they would get those scraps

Eventually both men die

The rich man sees and recognizes Lazarus next to Abraham

Send Lazarus to me to cool my tongue

Although he had ignored Lazarus in his sufferings
Now he asks Lazarus to come to his aid
   For the rich man, everything is about himself
   When he asks to have Lazarus go to his brothers
   We discover they are both Abraham’s children
The rich man was not ignoring a pagan foreigner
   He was ignoring one of his own
Just as he had ignored Moses and the teaching of the prophets
   Even if someone came back from the dead
   He would ignore that person as well
This parable is not that wealth is evil
   It does not praise poverty for poverty’s sake
   It is about what we do with our wealth
All our wealth
   Time, talent and treasure
It is about how we live our poverty
   Whether it is poverty of body
   Poverty of spirit
   Poverty of soul
   In whatever form it may take
We will be judged on account of our actions in this life
   In the letter to the Hebrews
We are told that it is appointed for every person to die but once
There is no going back
    The rich man could not go back
        But neither could Lazarus
            Only one would ever go back
                That one is Jesus Christ
While we walk this earth
    We are the rich man’s brothers and sisters
        One has risen from the dead
            Do we listen to him?
Last week we were told we cannot have 2 masters
    We cannot serve both God and mammon
        This week we see what happens when we try
The rich man was not evil
    He did not do bad things
        He wasn’t a thief
            He wasn’t a murderer
                He didn’t slander
For him, it was not about sins of commission
    But sins of omission
He had opportunities every day to do something
    Anything --- to help the poor man at his step
        Yet he refused
He was indifferent to the suffering of his brother
   Because of his wealth, he was complacent
St Paul gives us the antidote to a life of complacency
   Pursue righteousness and justice
   Practice devotion, faith, love
   Patience and gentleness
These are the key ingredients of a healthy, vibrant spiritual life
If our spiritual life seems to be kind of stagnant
   If we think of ourselves as a good person
   But realize something is missing
Maybe it is time to start looking not at what we have done
   Sins of commission
But look at what we don’t do
   Sins of omission
First we have to identify the Lazarus in our life
   We have to see him
   And ask: why has God placed this person ---
   These people in my life?
It is far too easy to keep them anonymous
   But they are not anonymous
   And when we have identified them
   Then decide on a course of action
There are three classic Christian responses

1st – to help one to one

2nd – combine our efforts with others

To help many Lazarus’s

3rd – to ask why this condition exists in our world today

And what can we do about it?

The challenge is laid out

We are here not only for ourselves

Do I practice temperance?

Or is it all about number one?

We are called to live in a covenental relationship

It is a covenant we live in our families

It is a covenant we share with our faith community

It is a covenant we share with all human beings

A covenant with God and ourselves

If I were called home today

Despite my words

Do my actions stand with the rich man?

Or with Lazarus?