

The First Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 16:19-31
June 3rd, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

There Was A Certain Beggar

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

There are two characters pictured in the Gospel from the Evangelist St. Luke. Which one do you think you are? The answer is that you are both. According to your sinful nature you are the rich man. You are consumed with the things of this world. You are full of pride and self-love. You feed yourself and ignore the less fortunate. You dress yourself in decent clothes, while others have little or nothing to wear. The rich man is a picture of us when we are consumed in our minds with worldly things, and we forget the everlasting, heavenly gifts that our Lord wants us to enjoy.

However, account of your faith in the Lord + Jesus Christ, you are also Lazarus. Lazarus means “he whom God helps.” Lazarus is really a picture of us as Christians in this life. His life is miserable. He is poor. He only has one set of clothes and they are torn and full of patches. He does not even have his health, for we are told that he had sores. Yet, in spite of all this misery, he is content. There is no mention of him grumbling about his condition. Why? Because Lazarus possessed the one thing the rich man did not have—he had faith in the Lord God.

The rich man looked only to this life. He wrongly thought, just as many people today do, that his enjoyment of things would continue into the next life. And that is one of the heresies that is taught today that we as Christians reject; this notion that everybody who is basically good is going to go to Heaven, regardless whether or not he believes on the Lord + Jesus as his Savior. Being good in this life, does not get a person into Heaven. This is not what Moses and the prophets preached. It is not what Christ + Jesus preached. And, it is not what the Church throughout the ages has preached. Although, there had to be a Reformation, in order for this teaching on being justified by faith alone to return to the forefront.

So then, the rich man is condemned not so much for enjoying the things of this life, but because he did not listen to Moses and the prophets. Moses and the prophets taught that the way into Heaven was to not be consumed with the things of this world, but trust in and cling to the things of the world to come. The rich man only looked to this life. If he had faith, he would have looked past this life into his eternal future reality. Which as it turns out, was to die and suffer the torments of Hades because he did not listen to Moses and the prophets; he did not have faith. We are like the rich man when we focus on this life and lose sight of the life of the world to come. And this rich man should serve as a warning to us all of what the eternal consequence is of forsaking Moses and the prophets.

Lazarus, on the other hand, looked to life of the world to come. He did listen to Moses and the prophets. They promised an eternal reward in Heaven. They promised an eternal escape from the miseries of this life; eternal joys. They promised a restoration of the body—a resurrection of the dead and a gifting a new and glorious bodies. Moses and the prophets promised an eternal feast resting in the arms of Father Abraham. Lazarus clung to these promises in faith.

In his earthly life, Lazarus did not seem to exemplify his name. He did not appear from all outward observances to be “he whom God helps.” But our faith and our salvation are not on the outside. They are in the heart. Lazarus in his heart was helped by God, for God gave him the greatest gift anyone can receive: faith—belief that salvation was found in the One, True Triune God alone. For this faith, Lazarus is found to suffer in this life.

Lazarus really is a picture of us. He was a beggar. We are beggars before the Lord God. We come before Him with nothing of ourselves to give. Our good works merit nothing. We have nothing to give to the Lord God in exchange for His grace and mercy. Therefore, empty handed, we come before the Lord begging for the scraps which might fall from the master’s table. We beg Him for forgiveness of our sins. We beg Him to save us from our enemies—the devil, the world, and our own flesh. We beg Him to reward us with eternal life in Heaven. And although we have nothing to give or offer, He freely gives us all those things through our faith—which is also a gift.

For these gifts we suffer in this life. We become enemies with the devil, the world and our sinful flesh and they war against us our entire Christian life. Lazarus was a picture of the Christian life. The devil, the world and his sinful flesh took every good thing from this life he could have. But, they could not take away his greatest gift—given by God—faith. Therefore, since Lazarus endured his crosses in this life, and clung to the promises of Moses and the prophets (which were really the promises of the Lord God), he was rewarded with an eternal life in Heaven. He rested for all eternity in the loving arms of Father Abraham. His sores were gone. He had food to the fill. He was dressed in fine raiment. And He had everlasting joy; no longer tormented by the trials and tribulations of this life.

Such is the reward waiting for us who cling to our Lord + Jesus Christ in faith. For, He is the One to Whom Moses and the prophets pointed to who would redeem all mankind from their sins. He is the One to Whom we cling to in faith. For forgiveness, life and salvation are found only in Him. And because we cling to Him, and only to Him, we are bound to suffer in this life as we are attacked by our enemies of the devil, the world and our sinful flesh. They will not relent until we are like the rich man—consumed by the things of this life so much that we forget the things of the life of the world to come.

If we endure, however, just like Lazarus did, we inherit a Kingdom in Heaven. We inherit the eternal rewards that Heaven promises. There we will be free from the weight of sin. There all our aches and pains of this life will be removed. There we will have new and glorious bodies. There we will join with all the saints in Heaven—our loved ones who have gone before and died in the faith. There we will sing with joy the eternal Liturgy of the Lamb in His Kingdom. There will be no more suffering, no more pain, no more loss, no more tears. There we will rest in the loving arms of our heavenly Father for all eternity as we enjoy the eternal marriage feast of the Lamb and His bride.

Therefore, cling to the preaching of the Word of God. Cling to Moses and the prophets and the One and Only Savior they proclaim. Cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus Christ, our One and Only Savior, Who suffered and died for us and for our salvation on the tree of the holy cross, in order that we might have the eternal rewards of Heaven and live with Him for all eternity. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!