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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
October 20, 2019
19th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Amos 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 6:6-16
Hymns: 7; 430; 531; 313:2

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Luke 16:19-31

¹⁹ "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.

²⁰ But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, ²¹ desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

²⁴ "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' ²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'

²⁷ "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, ²⁸ for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come

to this place of torment.’ ²⁹ Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ ³⁰ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ ³¹ But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’ (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Trading Places --

If you didn't know how this story turned out which one of these two men would be your choice for trading places? Would you actually choose the misery of Lazarus, or would you choose to be like the rich man who feasted every day with a lot of friends, a lot of good food. By all appearances, he had the good life, and was undoubtedly well liked, and a respected member of the community. After all we read in Psalm 49 that this is the way it is; *“while he lives he blesses himself For men will praise you when you do well for yourself.”* (Psalm 49:18) Not only would we choose this kind of success for ourselves, we would very likely choose it for our children as well! Who doesn't want to see their children do well and prosper?

This poor man named Lazarus was not the picture of success. He was the picture of misery, misery and abject poverty. His was a desperate set of circumstances. Would you choose such a life for yourself? I think not. For your children? Most definitely NOT!

Here perhaps we ought to recall the Lord's words to Samuel when he was about to anoint the next king of Israel in the days of King Saul. *“Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”* (1 Samuel

16:7) We are so easily fooled by appearances, even when it comes to true riches.

Jesus had been addressing this matter with the disciples and warning against the influence of the Pharisees, who not only loved to be praised for their outward righteousness, but also loved wealth. They were very adept at manipulating the law so that they might keep as much of their money as possible for themselves and not give it to the Lord or even use it to support elderly parents. So Jesus taught this lesson about the rich man and poor Lazarus that we might learn about --

THEME: Living Life Rich toward God!

We can easily get caught up in --

I. Living Rich during this Life.

It is most certainly not a sin to be wealthy. Many children of God, devout believers, have been wealthy. Abraham became very wealthy during the course of his life, and he is considered the father of our faith, for the Lord called Abraham out from his people and chose Abraham to be the one from whom the Savior of the world would eventually come. We also are called children of Abraham because we share his faith in the promises of God for our salvation. Abraham was a very wealthy man, blessed by the Lord. One might also reference Job who was also enormously wealthy and yet when he faced severe trials to his faith during which he lost not only his wealth, but his children, and then his health, he did not lose his faith. Then, after the period of trial, the Lord restored wealth to Job, and even greater wealth than before.

So what is the problem with the rich man in our text? It is clear that he fell into the trap of spiritual complacency. He was so busy enjoying the material wealth with which the Lord had blessed him, that he forgot the Lord. He didn't need the Lord. Isn't it interesting that Jesus didn't give this rich man a name. He just described his life. He

dressed like a king and ate sumptuously every day! He was living the good life, ... or as he?

Then again there was Lazarus. He was a poor beggar. He was covered with sores. He didn't put himself at the gate of the rich man's estate. He was placed there by others. Maybe, just maybe some of the spillage, not even leftovers, but the spillage from the rich man's table would end up coming his way. But then it is easier to look past someone so ... pitiful. Only the dogs seem to take pity on the man to come and lick the sores covering his body. How could anyone ever, ever imagine that Lazarus was rich?

The Lord names Lazarus. Lazarus is a name with great significance. Lazarus means "**He is one whom God helps.**" Think of that. He indeed may have been not only overlooked by the world, but despised by the world. But Lazarus was not despised by the Lord. **He is one whom the Lord helps.**

Material wealth is not what makes one rich, even in this life. Lazarus, in spite of his desperate circumstances possessed a wealth the rich man did not know. Lazarus had hope, not just a dream where he would imagine that "the sun will come up tomorrow." And "the world will be a better place." Lazarus had hope because he knew the Lord to be his God, and he was one God helps!

That is what we need for yourselves. That is certainly what we need to choose for our children, that they might know the Lord as their God who is "a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1) Trouble comes into every life because this world has been corrupted by the presence of sin, and sin brought with it suffering, pain, and death. Fortunes come and go, and in the end you don't have anything more than you did when you were born. However a trusting relationship with the Lord, that is something precious. Living rich in this life isn't about what you have, it's about who you know. It is all about knowing our God and Savior

Jesus Christ and possessing the full assurance that no matter what comes our way in this life, no matter how desperate our circumstances, we are as rich as Lazarus, for **you are one whom God helps!**

We say it every Sunday but how often do you really think about what an awesome thing it is that we say, *"Our help is in the name of the LORD who made heaven and earth!"* (Psalm 124:8) That is what makes you rich in this life: you know the Lord as your Savior God. He cares for you. He loves you with an everlasting love. He sent and sacrificed His only begotten Son to deliver you from sin and death. He is faithful and true, and He has promised to help you even as He has helped you this far. There is no doubt He can help. He can help because He is almighty God who with a verbal command created heaven and earth. It's not what you have that makes your life rich; it's who you know!

When you get that straight then you will be focused on --

II. Securing the Wealth of Eternal Life.

The inevitable happens. Both Lazarus the beggar and the rich man died. Immediately we see a dramatic distinction in the manner in which Jesus presents their deaths. Lazarus' death is presented with the amazing and comforting picture of the angels carrying Lazarus to Abraham's bosom, a clear expression for heavenly bliss and glory. The death of the rich man is simply stated that he died and was buried. There is no deliverance from the grave. Indeed Jesus presents the exact opposite. The rich man is presented as being imprisoned in the torments of hell. The world that we live in makes light of the prospects of eternal suffering in hell. Some even jest, "See you in hell," as if not only are they sure they will end up there with many others whom they like or hate, but they cannot imagine there are real horrors of hell. The depiction Jesus used in this parable is quite common in Scripture, that hell is comprised of suffering torments of flames from which there is no deliverance, not even the smallest relief.

There is no escape. All the good things the rich man enjoyed were no comfort for him in hell. Lazarus was comforted. The hope of heavenly glory was fulfilled for him.

There is another lesson for us here. This lesson is regarding the means of grace while we live in this time of grace. The rich man suggested that Lazarus return to earth to warn the rich man's brothers. He expressed his confidence that with such a sign they would repent and escape the torments of hell.

Miracles don't change hearts. Consider the many, many miracles of Jesus performed during his ministry, and still many turned away from the Lord. Even though they called for miraculous signs, and they witnessed them, they quickly dismissed them, some even accusing Jesus of being in league with the devil. In this parable Abraham reminded the rich man that his brothers on earth had the Holy Scriptures, and if they would not hear the words of Moses and the prophets they would not be convinced by miracles.

Now let us take a moment as we consider the outcome of their lives. With whom would you now trade places? That is easy isn't it? We all look forward to that glory which is reserved for us in heaven where we will join Abraham and all the saints before the presence of God basking in the glory of His heaven. There we shall be comforted. We should not, we dare not wish the torments of hell on anyone.

Now is the time to prepare ourselves, to secure our stake in that good life that lasts for all eternity. It is so much more important for us to secure that eternal good life than any material temporary life now in this world. The complacency of the rich leads to neglect of things spiritual, the neglect of growing in grace and in the knowledge the truth. This growth in grace comes to us only by feasting regularly upon the Word of God both in

church with regular worship and Bible classes and Sunday school lessons, and at home with devotions, and reading our Bibles.

And yes, of course there are people we care about that need to be brought to Jesus. Later may be too late. Now, in this life, is the time of grace. Now is when we are able to share the Word of God, the gospel of Christ our Savior with others. Do not dismiss the opportunity with the conclusion that this or that or another person will not listen. Everyone begins in the same plight of the darkness of unbelief. Everyone, absolutely everyone is disinclined to believe the gospel. It is a miracle when someone comes to faith. It is the power of God the Holy Spirit working through the gospel that changes hearts.

Now, what have we learned from this rich man and poor Lazarus? What have we learned about living the good life in either this life or that eternal life which is to come? In this life appearances can be deceiving. The rich man who dressed like a king and feasted every day, the good life he was living was superficial at best! But then that is what we ought to learn from Lazarus the beggar also isn't it. The misery of his life was also superficial. He was the one whom God helped in this life. Having God's presence and blessing in this life as we make our way to our heavenly home, well that does make life good. We too may possess the joy of believing, and the hope of glory. May the Spirit strengthen our hold on eternal life as we repudiate the good life of this world and cling to the cross of Christ as He is revealed to us in the Word! Then by His grace we shall be living rich toward God!

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans 15:13)