

The Ninth Sunday after Trinity Sunday  
St. Luke 16:1-9  
August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church  
Greenville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## An Accusation Was Brought to Him

*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.

Why does it appear that our Lord + Jesus is praising a man who is deceitful and self-serving? This text is a difficult text; at least at first glance. This text becomes clearer when one considers what comes before this pericope and what comes after this pericope.

This reading is the fourth of five straight parables from our Lord. It comes on the heels of three parables in chapter 15 of the Evangelist St. Luke that our Lord told because the Pharisees and scribes were accusing Him of *“receiving sinners and eating with them.”* In response, our Lord tells three parables (two of which we’ve heard preached during this Trinity season) that speak about forgiveness of the repentant sinner: the parable of the Lost Sheep; the parable of the Lost Coin; and the Parable of the Prodigal Son. These three parables our Lord + Jesus preaches against the false notion of the Pharisees and scribes that those who have repented of their sin should still be forsaken, because they had lived a sinful life.

Today’s parable (and the one after it) our Lord preaches to His disciples. That is to say, the parables of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son are meant for everyone to hear, but this parable of the Unjust Steward and the one following (the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, which we have also heard preached during this Trinity season), are meant especially for those of us within the Christian Church. These last two parables are for those of us, who already possess faith in the Lord + Jesus Christ alone for our salvation. That is to say, this parable of the Unjust Steward is for you and me. It is meant for *our* ears. We’ve already heard, with the whole world the great news that our Lord seeks and finds that which is lost. He seeks and finds us in the midst of our sin, and calls us by His holy Gospel and blessed Sacraments to repentance; to turn away from our sin and believe and rely upon our one, true Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ.

Now our Lord directs our hearts and our minds, with the disciples to whom He first preached this parable, to a specific type of sin, which leads us who are in the Church of God (those who possess faith in our Lord + Jesus Christ for salvation) away from this saving faith. In what way then, are we lead away from saving faith? How are we tempted and lead away from the one thing that we hold dear and that saves us from eternal death and damnation? Well, we are lead away by the cares, concerns and riches of this world. Just as we learned from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, that the rich man *“fared sumptuously everyday”* while poor, miserable Lazarus was ignored at his gate daily, not even receiving the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table, that riches and the selfish pursuit of money, to the

exclusion of helping our neighbor with the gifts that our Lord has given us in this life leads to eternal ruin in Hell.

Here in this parable of the Unjust Steward, we are also taught how the seeking after of worldly things to the exclusion of the spiritual things of God, lead to our eternal ruin. Here, before we continue, it must be pointed out, and we must remember, that our Lord is not praising the Unjust Steward for his deception and misuse of his master's possessions. Rather the Unjust Steward is praised for his prudence; his diligence to do what it takes to get what he wants. The Unjust Steward uses deception to gain what he wants—friends who will be kind to him, and take him in when he gets booted from his job and his home. The Unjust Steward, like all the sons of this world, is looking to secure his future.

This is the true point of the parable: *“the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.”* What does this mean? It means that the world in their pursuit of earthly things—money, house, home, cars, family, land, and whatever other earthly pursuits there are—are more diligent in working to obtain these perishable treasures so that they can secure for themselves a future than we in the Church, who possess faith and eternal life, in obtaining the imperishable crown of eternal life in Heaven. In short, this parable contains a two-fold condemnation. First, we are condemned for our vain pursuits of the things of this world. Second, we are condemned for either not pursuing the things of the life of the world to come, or are apathetic about these things.

Think of it this way: many of us take great pains and work very hard (or have done so in the past) so that we can have what we call “a decent retirement.” We work hard at it. We get a good education, so that we can have a good job, so that we can make good money, so that we can make good investments, so that we are well taken care of when we retire. *“The sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.”* We are shrewd, that is, prudent, or wise, about how to live comfortably as we can in this life. Oh, that we would put the same shrewdness and prudence; that we would use the same diligence in our use of the spiritual things of God to obtain the crown of eternal life in Heaven: hearing the Gospel, studying the Word of God, praying to our Lord to grant us our petitions, rejoicing in our Holy Baptism daily, coming to this house of God to receive the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar often, rejoicing continually with our fellow citizens of Heaven in this parish over the grace that we have been given on account of Christ's suffering and death!

Sadly, too often, these become for the Christian “things that are done on Sunday,” or “when we are at church.” They end up taking a back seat to the pursuits of our lives, they do not, as they should, take center stage in our life and in our conduct. Our whole life should be ordered according to the Word of God and the eternal promises that He has bestowed upon us. We must be on guard against the apathy that leads us to believe that Heaven—that our death—is a future event far down the road, that we have plenty of time to be concerned about those “spiritual” things, when we are retired and we have plenty of time to think about such things. One of the problems with that thinking is that when we do get to that point, we think of other ways to eat up our time spent in the things of God, and we find more ways to put it off and concern ourselves with earthly things and an earthly future, that will sadly end: seeing the grandkids, traveling across the country, doing all the *earthly* things we put off before we were retired.

Now is the time! Consider again the parable that follows this one: the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man thought nothing of the spiritual things of God, even though he had Moses and the prophets. What was his reward? The parable of the Unjust Steward is also similar to the parable told in the twelfth chapter of the Evangelist St. Luke: the parable of the Rich Fool, who after filling up his barns, said that now he could take his ease; eat, drink and be merry. However, the Lord said that his soul would be required of him that night, and the things that he worked so hard to get to fill up his barns would go to someone else.

This pull of the world to pursue mammon—to pursue riches and wealth—is understandable. We are after all in the devil's kingdom; he is the ruler of this world, and all the world follows after their master. For the devil desires that no man, woman or child enter into eternal life, or receive the gifts of God, or hear the eternal promises of God that create and strengthen their faith. Therefore, he leads mankind astray into all sorts of worldly pursuits that lead us away from the eternal, spiritual things of God. You might say that the devil is the steward of the world. He is the one who rules and manages it. Unfortunately, he is an evil and unjust steward of the things of God, leading mankind into every type of sin and shame; into despair and guilt; into pride and selfishness. Therefore, our Lord God in His great mercy upon us, has sent His Son, our Lord + Jesus Christ, to take on our flesh, and obey the will of God which we were and are unable to fulfill, and suffered our punishment on the tree of the holy Cross, so that He might buy us back from the devil that unjust steward.

In Christ, we now have a new Steward—a just and holy Steward—who gives us His Holy Ghost, Who in turn gives us faith, life and salvation through the holy means of grace: Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, the Holy Supper, the preaching of the Holy Gospel, and the mutual conversation and consolation of our fellow Christians. And our Lord, on account of His death and resurrection has declared to the unjust steward of this world—the devil—that his time is short; the stewardship will be taken away from him, so that our Lord might give us a new Heaven and a new Earth, filled with His righteousness, and free from sin and ruled by His just stewardship.

But, woe to us! For the devil knowing that his time is short, attacks the Church from without and within. He attacks the Church from without by making the pursuit of mammon—riches and wealth; of earthly possessions—the prize to be desired by all. And we are tempted to be like our neighbors in the world and live our lives as they do, and do all the evil things that they do, and say all the evil things they say, and think all the evil things they think. And, as bad as that is, especially when we fall prey to this temptation, and give in and act like the world does, it is far worse for us Christians, because the devil, that lying, deceiving, unjust steward, attacks those of us in the holy, catholic Church by tricking us into believing that it is okay to diminish our faith and good works; that it is okay to diminish our pursuits of the eternal, spiritual things of God because we're deluded into thinking like the world that the pursuit of earthly things are the important things for us to be concerned with now.

But, consider the parable! Each of the debtors owed an hundred measures; one of oil, one of wheat. An hundred, being a multiple of ten, represents the number of perfection, that is, complete completeness. We are in debt to our Master, our Lord, for He has bought us by His sacrifice upon the holy Cross. By virtue of our Holy Baptism we are the Lord's, we are His servants, indebted to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. But, observe what the unjust steward—the devil—does. He deceives those of us in the Church into reducing the debt that we owe our Lord and Master. The oil and the wheat can be viewed as faith and good works. By the deception of the devil, and by the pull of worldly pursuits—the desire for earthly possessions and mammon—our faith and good works are diminished—our faith by half, and our good works by one fifth. In short, we are deceived by the unjust steward of this world to forsake the eternal, spiritual things of God, for the temporal, earthly things of this life. And what is the end result? Both our faith in God and our compassion and desire to help our fellowman are diminished because we are more concerned with what we own and have. We exchange a heart of love for God and our neighbor for a heart that is selfish and self-serving; we become like the Unjust Steward of this parable. We become friends of the devil.

This may sound harsh to our ears! And it should, for this is a stern warning from our Lord to not forsake the things that lead to our eternal life. Be diligent in your pursuit of the life to come, more so than your pursuit of the perishable things of this world. How do we do this? By daily living in the Word of God and in our Holy Baptism; daily drowning the Old Adam, with all of his sins and evil desires and daily emerging from the waters of your Holy Baptism to live in the promise of forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation that was bestowed upon you at your Holy Baptism. In short, live daily in repentance,

that is, in contrition—sorrow and terror over your sin—and believe that on account of Christ and His suffering and death on your behalf, and not on account of anything you did, that your sins are forgiven you. For a life lived in repentance is a life that continually seeks God; a life that is full of contrition, sorrow and terror, over one's sins, is a life that seeks the forgiveness of sins from God alone constantly. That person reads God's Word daily and diligently, prays to God earnestly and fervently; he comes to this house of God as often as he can to receive from God the gifts that give him ease from the trials and temptations of the devil, the world, and his flesh, and points him to the eternal gifts that have been given to him through God's gracious means—forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation.

Therefore, so that you know that you have these gifts, hear and listen what I am about to say! I said earlier that we are debtors of God, just as we are taught in Luther's meanings of each of the articles of the Apostles' Creed. We are "to thank and praise, serve and obey Him"; we are to "serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness"; it is Him who has "called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith."

We are told by holy Scripture that all our sins, our debts have been written down, and a record is being kept that will be retold on the Last Day, the Day of Judgment. An accusation will be brought against you by the ruler of this world. Every sinful thought, word and deed that you have ever committed, or will commit, will be exposed on the Last Day as the accuser points his bony finger at you, saying, "He did all these sinful things." When you consider your sins, this should frighten you! However, take heart, for the sins—the debts you owe—that have been written down have been taken away from you and nailed to the tree of the holy Cross. Those debts of sins have been burned away completely on the altar of sacrifice that is the holy Cross. The debt is completely paid, not just a fifth; and not just half, but completely. And in exchange you have been given complete and perfect faith and good works, for Christ's faith in His Father and His good works in obeying His Father's will have been credited to you and have been bestowed upon you as your own righteousness. Therefore, on the Last Day, when the Lord reads the debts against the whole world, your bill will bear the works of your Lord + Jesus Christ.

Therefore, knowing that we have received such a gracious gift from God, why would we squander it by pursuit of worldly things, or neglect it by apathy in our daily lives toward the Word of God. Cherish this great gift of God, for the things of this life will pass away, but the things of God—forgiveness, life and salvation—will be yours for all eternity. Grant this Lord unto us all! 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.