

The First Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 16:19-31
June 14th, 2020
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
All Saints Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Myrtle Beach, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

There Is A Great Gulf Fixed

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, we beseech Thee so to rule and govern our hearts by Thy Holy Spirit, that we may not, like the rich man, hear Thy Word in vain, and become so devoted to things temporal as to forget things eternal; but that we readily and according to our ability minister to such as are in need, and not defile ourselves with surfeiting and pride; in trial and misfortune keep us from despair, and grant us to put our trust wholly in Thy fatherly help and grace, so that in faith and Christian patience we may overcome all things, through Thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

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

Not everyone who dies goes to Heaven; not everyone “rests in peace.” Our Lord + Jesus Christ shows us this in the parable that He tells in today’s Gospel from the Evangelist St. Luke. The rich man dies and is in “torments in Hades” and “tormented in this flame.” Hell is a very real place. It is prepared for the devil and his angels. The lake of fire is meant for the fallen angels who rebelled against the Triune Lord God. But men who reject the Lord + Jesus; who do not believe on Him also receive the reward of their unbelief.

There is a false and pernicious teaching going around today that teaches that our Lord + Jesus absolved, that is, forgave everyone their sins through His death on the cross. This is nothing but heresy. It is a confusion of the atonement. Our Lord + Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world. He did not absolve, or justify, everyone on the tree of the holy cross. If this teaching were true that would be that all the people in Hell are forgiven of their sins, but somehow that forgiveness means absolute squat. If everyone’s sins are forgiven on the cross, what is the point of the absolution? The pastor’s forgiveness in absolution means absolutely nothing, if all sins were forgiven on the cross. The same is true of the sacraments. What is the point of Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, which as we learn in the Small Catechism are for the giving of forgiveness of sins, if this has already happened two thousand years ago? We reduce the absolution and the Sacraments down to memorials; play acting that we do to obey God’s commandment. In essence, it makes us no different than any other Reformed church body.

If the people in Hell are forgiven of their sins, it makes our Lord + Jesus out to be the biggest snatch thief; giving with one hand and taking with the other. This false and pernicious doctrine denies what we learn in today’s parable from the Evangelist St. Luke. The people in Hell endure eternal torments in flame. Furthermore, our Lord + Jesus says that there is a great gulf fixed between Heaven and Hell; there is a great gulf fixed between eternal paradise and torments.

The difference between the rich man and Lazarus is not hard to see. The rich man fared sumptuously every day, and dressed in fine clothes. He lived His life as if the Lord God did not matter; as if He did not even exist. His life of luxury was all he knew, and all he cared about. He had no time for faith in the Lord God; no time for worship; for study of God's Word and prayer. He did not bother to confess his sins, or to receive absolution. He gladly lived in his sins and relished his life of sin. He trusted in the things of this world and the things that gave him pleasure in this life. For this he earned for himself eternal torments in Hell. His sins were retained because he trusted in his earthly possessions and not the Lord God.

Lazarus had nothing in this life. He did not even have perfect health. The little dogs had to come and lick his sores. He had no food, and had to beg for the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. But for all of his nothing that we are shown in this parable he still retained one thing; the one thing needful. He retained his faith in the Lord God. Amidst his brief earthly suffering Lazarus was preserved steadfast in the faith. He clung in his sorrow, hunger and pain to the mercies of the Triune Lord God. Therefore, on account of his faith in the Lord God; in his faith that the Lord God forgives those who trust in Him, he received an eternal reward in Heaven. He rested eternally in the bosom of Father Abraham.

On account of our faith, we too will rest in the loving arms of Father Abraham—our loving Triune Lord God. Our suffering in this life, just like Lazarus', will no longer torment us. We will live in eternal peace. For those who cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus and His works and merits on our behalf, we will "rest in peace." We will rest in the loving arms of our Father in Heaven. Our Brother will welcome us into the mansions that He has gone before us to prepare. In His Father's house are many mansions. He has prepared a place for us in these mansions through His work on the tree of the holy cross. His perfect obedience to the Law and His innocent suffering and death paid the price of our sins, and the sins of the whole world. When we die, on account of our faith in Him and His works, He will welcome us into these heavenly mansions.

The rich man lived in a mansion during his life. Lazarus lived at the gate of the rich man, that is, he lived with no earthly home. The unbelievers in this world make their dwelling this life. Everything that they are and have is tied to this earth; it is tied to this life. They have no thought of a life to come. They are too busy making a life for themselves here on Earth. Not so Lazarus; not so you and me. We make our dwelling in Heaven. We cling to the reality that our citizenship is in Heaven; that our home is in Heaven. Everything that we have and love is all about the home that is promised us in Heaven.

We cling to the promise of a life in Heaven. We cling in faith to the promise that we will rest in peace in the arms of Father Abraham, just like Lazarus does. There is a great gulf fixed between Hades and paradise. This is not just a law statement; this is not just a slamming of the door upon the unbelievers for their unbelief—for their rejection of the Triune Lord God, but this is also good news. For us this means that the torments that we endure in this life—our sinfulness, sickness and disease, poverty and our strains with our relationships with other people and our fellowman, and the like—all of these torments that we endure now, and that Lazarus endured during his life, will have a great gulf fixed between us and them. The torments of this life will be as far away from us as East is from West. We will be at perfect peace.

We will have no choice—no other desire—but to sing the eternal praise of the Lamb in His Kingdom. We will join with all of the saints and angels in the eternal Liturgy of the Lamb in His Kingdom. We may not have a thousand voices on our own, but there will be myriads of voices singing our Lord's praises eternally. Our sins will be forgiven there, because they were forgiven here on Earth through the means that our Lord + Jesus left for us to receive the work of the Holy Ghost. The preaching of the Gospel, the absolution of the pastor as if from God Himself, Holy Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and our gathering together as two or three, or more, as we console and converse with one another about the

sufferings that we endure in this life, and the good news that our sufferings will have an end, all serve to bring us forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. These things create faith in us through the work of the Holy Ghost, so that we might cling to them our whole lives and be preserved steadfast in the one, true saving faith in our Lord + Jesus Christ.

My dear friends, there is a great gulf fixed between Heaven and Hell; there is a great gulf fixed between the torments that we endure in this life, and the pleasures and peace that we will enjoy for all eternity. When the angels of the Lord carry us to the bosom of Father Abraham; when the angels come to bear us to our eternal home, our Lord + Jesus will awaken us from peaceful sleep and we will see with our own eyes the joy of our eternal home in Heaven. Even better, we will see our Lord + Jesus face to face with our own eyes; we will see the Person of the Son of God Who was born as a man, who fulfilled the Law of God for us and suffered and died as a payment of our sins. This is a thought too wonderful to behold.

For as much suffering we endure in this life, we deserve so much more; we merit ways still rougher. The rich man and all those who live in unbelief will find themselves eternally enduring these more rougher ways, because on account of their unbelief their sins will be retained. But for those of us who cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus and His works and merits, we will enjoy our eternal homes in Heaven with Lazarus and all the saints who have died in the faith before us. Lord, let at last Thine angels come and bear us to Father Abraham's loving embrace, and our eternal home. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Help us, O Lord, that we may not despair in the day of want and trouble, nor in the day of plenty abuse Thy gifts or set our hearts upon things temporal, but in true faith and love wait patiently for another life, which, when all earthly griefs are past, Thou wilt give to all that believe in Thee; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!