

Sermon for June 11, 2023 – The First Sunday after Trinity

From 1 John 4: “God is love.” And His love has been perfected in us. Having this perfect love we need not fear the day of God's judgment. There is no condemnation for us. Christ has been judged guilty for us and raised for our justification that we might believe in His atonement - so we need not fear. This was God's love – that He loved us first. Those who hate their brother whom they have seen cannot love God whom they have not seen. There was a certain man whom **Jesus loved** who died. His Name was Lazarus. Jesus raised this one whom He loved who was named Lazarus from the dead.

And we come to our text from Luke 16: Jesus tells us a story about a certain rich man who is nameless and a certain beggar who is also named Lazarus. The rich man is really rich. We might compare him to a present day oil baron or oligarch or tech giant. He dressed in the finest of clothes, purple and fine linen – not just on festive days - but **all** the time. He ate the best foods and drank the best drink - **all** the time. Scriptures tell us that the rich man lived in the lap of luxury **all** the time - every minute of every day.

Compare the rich man to the beggar named Lazarus. First, notice that the rich man has no name in this story – we might say that he has everything in the world but He is nothing and no one to Jesus, the Son of God because Jesus does not know His name. Jesus does not know him. Then notice that Jesus knew the beggar by the name of Lazarus. The beggar was diseased and had sores on his body. He lay at the gate of the rich man begging for food. He was in constant hunger. He would have feasted on the crumbs which fell off the rich man's table, but he received none of those crumbs. The rich man ignored him. He gave the crumbs to the dogs.

Neither did Lazarus receive any care for his sores from the rich man or his staff. It was the wild dogs who came and licked his sores. He was helpless to keep the dogs away and maybe he didn't want to keep them away. Many(including me) claim that a dog licking raw sores help the sores to heal. Maybe here we should mention that Lazarus means “God has helped.” God provided the dogs as a means of healing for the raw sores of the beggar named Lazarus. In any event we see that Lazarus was treated worse than the wild dogs that inhabited the cities of those days.

So, it was that Lazarus, the beggar died. Being a man of faith in God and known to God by name, the angels took him to Abraham - the father of faith - in God's heavenly kingdom. The rich man also died.

But while Lazarus was with all the believers in God in heaven, the rich man still nameless and unknown to God and to us, went to Hades, also known as Hell. The rich man in hell was able to see Abraham in heaven. He cried out for Abraham to send Lazarus to him to dip his finger in water and cool

his hot tongue that was being tormented in the flames of hell.

But Abraham declined, reminding the former rich man of the days of the past when he lived in luxury, all the while ignoring the beggar Lazarus in his poverty and disease. But after death things have been reversed as Lazarus lives in comfort while the former rich man lives in torment. Please note that the rich man does not acknowledge that things have changed. He still considers Lazarus as a poor man or slave in requesting that Abraham send Lazarus to him to comfort him.

In Abraham's declination of the rich man's request also comes the acknowledgment that there is a great chasm between the place where Abraham is and the place where the former rich man is. There is a great space that is impassible between heaven and hell. Thanks be to God for that chasm.

But the rich man wasn't through asking for favors. He then asks that Abraham send Lazarus to his father's house to warn his five brothers lest they come to the place of torment where he now resides. But Abraham replies that his brothers have Moses and the prophets to listen to, let them listen to them.

But the rich man – still asking for favors - then asks that someone from the dead return to his brothers to warn them, then they will repent. Abraham answers that if they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they listen to one who is raised from the dead. Here we must note that another Lazarus did return from the dead but it made no difference to the unbelievers of his day. The Pharisees and Sadducees and other unbelievers did not only **not** believe the risen Lazarus, they wanted to kill him.

All this leads us – as believers - to Jesus. He came to warn the world about hell. But many, maybe even most, would not and do not believe that He is the Son of God come into the flesh to pay for the sins of the world. They do not believe that they are separated from God by a great chasm caused by sin and death. They do not believe in Moses and the Prophets who warned the world about sin and foretold the day when God's Savior who would come to reconcile men to God. They do not believe that by believing in Jesus as their Redeemer, they are reconciled to God.

But – dear ones – Jesus returns often to warn us about hell. He returns today in Word and Sacrament to warn us about hell and give us the Hope of eternal life with Him and the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven. He has returned to us in the words of Scripture. You can be assured of these things because Jesus knows you, knows your name given in Baptism. In a few minutes He will return to you in His Holy Supper to forgive your sins and strengthen your faith. We, too, **could** be named Lazarus. God has helped us. He has saved us from hell. He has saved us from sin, death, and the devil. God has helped us through His Son, Christ Jesus. Thanks be to God for His love and help. Amen.