

The First Sunday after Trinity Sunday  
St. Luke 16:19-31  
June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
St. Michael and All Angels Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC  
Augusta, GA  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Here He Is Comforted

*In Nomine Iesu!*

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

**Sermon Text:**

“But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things: but now here he is comforted, and thou art in anguish.’”

**Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

O Gracious Father, God of love, Who, loving us from everlasting, gavest Thy Son into death for us when we were enemies, and desirest us to know the love Thou hast to us, and on our part to love Thee and our neighbor: we beseech Thee, remove from our hearts tormenting fear, and fill them with childlike faith and trust in Thee, cleanse us also from hatred and ill-will, incline us to render one to another kindly dispositions and services of love, and grant us at the last boldness in the Day of Judgment; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One 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.

My dear friends, one of the hardest parts about being a pastor is not being able to take away someone’s physical pain. To watch someone suffering with an illness or some physical malady and not be able to do anything about it pains us ministers gravely. We have not been given the gift to heal physical disorders. Although, this is common to everyone. Unless one is a medical professional, most of us cannot heal someone’s physical ailments. There are even some illnesses and physical defects that even the medical profession cannot heal. This may leave us feeling defeated at times; wanting to heal the affliction but being unable to do so. We ache with pain in our hearts for those who suffer such afflictions and not be able to do anything for them.

At least that is what it appears to this evil world. The world expects the Church to be able to perform some miracle for these individuals, to prove that it is as gracious and merciful as it claims. Indeed, there are many individuals who take advantage of poor people’s need to see miracles by putting on a show that draws people into their fake shenanigans. These so-called faith-healers deceive many into grasping at the fake straws they put forth. One would think that it would go a long way to convert many to Christianity if the Church was able to perform miracles on a regular basis. But our Lord + Jesus tells us in today’s Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke that that would not be the case. Indeed, many miracles happen every day which if not outright proving the existence of the Lord God, strongly allude to His presence among us. And yet, the world remains either apathetic towards the Church, or openly hostile.

Our Lord + Jesus tells us parable today. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man

in the parable petitions Father Abraham that He would send Lazarus back from the dead to be a witness to the afterlife. Lazarus was to return to this world so that the rich man's five brothers might see and believe and not end up in the place of torment in which the rich man found himself. He thought that if someone had risen from the dead this would be proof enough—a miracle great enough—to prove to this sinful world that what the Church teaches is true. But our Lord + Jesus, through the voice of Father Abraham, rightly points out that this would not be the case.

In fact, there was a real man named Lazarus, who our Lord + Jesus brought back to life after Lazarus had been in the grave for four days; the amount of time in which a body would start to decay and stink. The Lord + Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. This was just before the Lord endured His own suffering and death at the hands of wicked men. What do you suppose was the response of those who heard that Lazarus was raised from the dead? Sure, there were those who rejoiced at the fact, and believed that the Lord + Jesus was the Messiah sent from the Lord God. It was this event which prompted the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem with shouts from the crowds and the waving of palm and olive branches, and the praises of the people. But we are told by the Evangelists that not everyone was pleased by the raising of Lazarus. Indeed, we are told that this prompted anger and hatred for Lazarus. They sought to kill him, just as they sought to kill the Lord + Jesus.

Even the Lord's own resurrection did not do much to turn men's hearts toward the Lord. After His resurrection and before His ascension, only five hundred people believed on Him and were witness to Him being raised from the dead. Even after the gifting of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost only three thousand were baptized on that day; three thousand out of about six million people. So, our Lord + Jesus is right. Father Abraham in the parable is right. No one is going to be converted to Christianity by observing some miracle. No one is going to turn to the Church if the ministers were able to heal people of their physical diseases and maladies.

Even as much as it pains ministers to watch the failing bodies of those under their care, and their own failing bodies, we have been given a much greater weapon against the powers of evil in this world. We have been given the Word of the Lord God. This was the point of our Lord's parable. Great miracles are not going to convert people to Christianity. Some miracles may turn people's heads toward the Church for a time, but as history reveals, the passage of time and the return of more physical ailments not being healed turns men's hearts away once again. What keeps people in the Church amidst the physical pains and sorrows of this life is the Word of the Lord God. The preaching that we have a Savior and Redeemer is what truly draws people into the Church, and keeps them there. For by the Word the Holy Ghost works to create, strengthen, and renew faith in the hearts of all those who hear the Word of the Lord God.

We have as our example from the parable the man called Lazarus. How does he end up in Heaven and the rich man does not? The rich man has all that the world offers and craves. He is dressed in fine clothes, he "fares sumptuously every day," meaning he never went hungry. He was popular and loved by the world. This is the type of person that the world imagines will be in Heaven. Such a person must truly be blessed by the Lord God to have all these earthly possessions. But the rich man lacked the one thing needful for admittance into Heaven. He lacked faith in the Lord God. He trusted in his worldly possessions. He loved the things of this life more than the things of the life to come. Many people in this life are drawn away from the Church because of worldly pursuits such as the rich man had.

Lazarus, on the other hand, had nothing. He did not even have his health. He was poor, hungry, and the only comfort he had was the wild dogs coming to lick his sores and wounds. He was fed only with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. The world looks at such a person and believes them to be hated by the Lord God. This is especially true among the prosperity Gospel preachers. One wonders how the Joel Osteens of the world get around this text. For the rich man is clearly shamed,

and the poor man Lazarus is the one who ends up in the bosom of Father Abraham. What does Lazarus have that the rich man does not? He has faith in the Lord God. This is the true miracle! By the world's reckoning Lazarus should cry out in hatred for the Lord God. Look what miserable conditions and physical ailments this man has to endure. Surely a loving Lord God would do something about this poor man's condition. But that is the point! The Lord God did do something for this poor man Lazarus. He gave him the words of Moses and the prophets.

He heard the Word of the Lord God and believed on Him. He heard the promise of a Savior and believed on Him. He trusted not in the things of this world. He did not turn away from the promises because he had less than the rich man. He did not turn away because he barely had anything of this world to call his own. No, he remained faithful, because he truly believed the promises that were spoken of by Moses and the prophets. From God could nought divide him. The promise of forgiveness of his sins. The promise of an eternal life in Heaven resting, comforted, in the bosom of Father Abraham was all that he needed to endure the cruelties of this life. The promise of rescue from the evils of this life caused him to cling in faith to the Lord God.

This is why ministers realize, even when they are unable to heal the physical conditions of those under their care, that they possess something far greater than the ability to perform some miracle. We have the Word of the Lord God. We have the promises that were handed down from Moses and the prophets. We have the promises of a crucified and risen Savior in the Lord + Jesus, the Christ. For poor, miserable sinners who know their lost condition on account of their manifold sins and trespasses find more comfort in the promise of forgiveness and salvation offered in the Word of the Lord God. Any disease or physical ailment that we endure in this life pales in comparison to the promise of an eternal life in Heaven where those diseases and ailments will no longer torment us.

The unbelieving world will be like the rich man in the parable. Notice that the rich man has no name. Some Early Fathers want to give him the name of Demas, which is just the use of the Greek word for "rich man." But he has no name because as loved and important as he was to the world, in the torments and anguish of Hell, he has nothing. Even the circumstances of his death draw no notice. He simply died and was buried. No fanfare, no praises heaped upon him, no words of "rest in peace" spoken about him. He died and was buried, and now endures the torments of Hell because of his unbelief. Such is the fate of the unbelieving world.

Contrast that with the death of Lazarus, who during his earthly life endured torments and anguish. He was carried by the angels to the bosom of Father Abraham. There is great care and compassion showed by the Lord God for those who suffered in this life, but through remaining faithful unto death received the crown of life. This is the promise that we have. We have the promise of an eternal life in Heaven with our Lord and Savior, Jesus, the Christ. There we will join with all the saints who have been carried by the angels to the waiting arms of our loving, heavenly Father to receive comfort from the pains of this life forever and ever.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us hear the Word of the Lord God which speaks of the promises of an eternal home in Heaven. And let us, as St. John says in the Epistle reading, show love for our fellow man by preaching to them the Word of the Lord God. For true love is not as the world claims it is, letting people languish in their sins and unbelief, like the rich man from the parable. Rather, true love is proclaiming the remission of sins for all those who confess their sins and cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus. True love is giving people a foundation for a faith that secures for them an eternal home in Heaven. Let us love our brothers with the Word of the Lord God, which preaches into their ears their forgiveness and salvation that leads to their eternal comfort, especially when we can do nothing to fix their physical and earthly pains. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same 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!*