

The First Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 16:19-31
June 22nd, 2025
St. Bartholomew Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Fort Myers, FL
Pastor Jerald Dulas

A Certain Rich Man

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day: and a certain beggar named Lazarus was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table; yea, even the dogs came and licked his sores.”

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, on this Octave of the Feast of the Holy Trinity we hear the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The Trinity season begins with our celebration of the Holy Trinity, our Triune Lord God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We begin this season by hearing about Who our God is, what kind of God He is, what He does for us through Holy Baptism and the other means of grace. Here on the Octave, we hear how our Triune Lord God continues to draw us to Himself. We begin with Him, and then proceed to His holy Word. For it is by Moses and the Prophets whereby we learn about Who our Triune Lord God is. Through the pure preaching of the Word of the Lord God, and the Blessed Sacraments our Triune Lord God reveals to us Who He is, and what He does for us. He has created, redeemed, and sanctified us. It is faith in this truth, yea rather, it is faith in Him Who reveals this truth to us, by which we are saved eternally.

To this end, we are given the parable of the rich man and Lazarus by our Lord + Jesus as it is recorded by the Evangelist St. Luke. This parable was told by our Lord because of the Pharisees response to the previous parable our Lord tells in this chapter, the parable of the unjust steward. Our Lord sums up that parable by saying, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” The Pharisees, who loved money rather than the Lord God, scoffed at the parable. They loved the things of this world, while pretending to be zealous for the things of the Lord God. They put on a religious exterior, but their hearts were far from the Lord God. To them the Lord + Jesus preaches the parable of the rich man and Lazarus to show the end result of those who love money and the things of this world over and above the things of the Lord God.

The rich man represents all those who love mammon rather than the Lord God. Observe how our Lord describes him and his life in this world. First, our Lord says that he was a rich man. God had blessed this man with all that he needed in this life. He wanted of nothing. This is further illustrated by our Lord when He describes this certain rich man's life. He is described as being clothed in purple. Purple clothing was the clothing worn by kings and princes, and other noble men. In the Greek, the tense of the word that we translate "clothed" literally means that he was constantly putting on purple in the form of a magnificent robe. He was also constantly clothed in the finest of linen, byssus linen. It was worn as a tunic near the body. In other words, this certain rich man had the finest of cloths, and he wore them every day of his life. There was never a day when he was not dressed in the finest of linens and purple robes. He dressed like a king, or prince, or other nobleman.

The certain rich man also was "faring sumptuously" every day. Literally he was "making merry every day." His whole life was one gorgeous celebration. He lived every day as if it was a party. Certainly, this means that he ate and feasted on the finest of foods and beverages, for celebrations are almost always accompanied by feasting. Some celebrations are all about the food. But implied in this is that he was never sad or depressed. One does not really feel like feasting and celebrating when they are in a foul mood. This certain rich man is described by our Lord + Jesus as having the type of life wherein he was happy and satisfied. He had an enjoyable life. He, being rich, could enjoy his life. He could enjoy all the benefits this world has to offer. He "fared sumptuously" every day. He was clothed in purple and fine linen. But he lacked the one thing that was truly important for this life. And we will come back to that after looking at the other individual our Lord + Jesus talks about in this parable.

Whereas the certain rich man had everything this world could offer, and the best that this world could offer, there was also a certain beggar. The Greek word used in this text for rich implies fullness. The Greek word used for beggar in our text literally means "to crouch, or cringe." A person crouching or cringing before us is below us. This man Lazarus, (for unlike the rich man, our Lord + Jesus gives this beggar a name) spent his life crouching and cringing. Just as the attribute of the certain rich man was one of receiving the spoils of this life and world, the attribute of the certain beggar, named Lazarus, was one of crouching and cringing, of begging, of having nothing.

The certain beggar, named Lazarus, was the opposite of the rich man. The rich man received the best this world could offer. What did Lazarus receive? He was "laid at [the rich man's] gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table." Now our translation says that he was "laid at the gate," but the literal translation is that he was thrown at the gate. He was discarded, by whoever no longer wanted to deal with him, as trash and refuse at the rich man's gate. The rich man was surrounded by friends and acquaintances, Lazarus had nobody. This is where he was left to spend his miserable life. Moreover, Lazarus was full of sores. Implying that where he was dumped, was where he had to remain. On account of his sores, he was unable to move to another place.

Lazarus is dumped at the rich man's gate as an opportunity for the rich man to show mercy and love for his fellow man. It was his opportunity to use the wealth with which he was blessed to assist his neighbor. But we are told by our Lord + Jesus that this did not happen. Lazarus "was desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table." We are not told whether Lazarus actually received any of these crumbs. Certainly, if he did, they did not come from the rich man himself, but Lazarus only received that which some kind slave who was in charge of disposing of the remaining trash tossed his way. In other words, Lazarus had none of the good things that this life could offer. He had no home, he had whatever rags were discarded to wear, just as his food was whatever was discarded from the rich man's table. His only friends and comfort in this life were the dogs which came and licked his sores. But although Lazarus had nothing which people in this world seek after, he was blessed beyond measure.

For Lazarus had the one thing that the rich man lacked: he had Moses and the prophets. He had the promises of the Triune Lord God of an eternal life in heaven. While these two men lived their lives in this world no one could see the faith in Lazarus. And no one could see the unbelief, and worship of mammon, in the rich man. The world sees only the outward signs. They see only the grand life and possessions of the rich man, and believe that he is the one to emulate and follow. The world sees only the lack and destitution of Lazarus, and they, like the Pharisees, scorn this beggar. The world cannot see that Lazarus is rich beyond measure, and that the certain rich man is destitute before Father Abraham. While they lived their lives in this world, no one but Father Abraham could see the condition of their hearts. Only He could see the faith of Lazarus, and the unbelief of the certain rich man.

In the parable this is only revealed after they die. Lazarus, the only one who is given a name because his name is written in the Book of Life, is carried by the angels into the waiting bosom of the heavenly Father Abraham. All that is said of the certain rich man is that he died, and was buried. It is certain that on earth the rich man would have been celebrated by all his friends and relatives. He would have been mourned. His life would have been praised and exulted. They would have talked about all the good things he did in his life, all the faring sumptuously and being clothed in purple and fine linen. And Lazarus would have had a pauper's funeral. He would have been dumped in a mass grave with no fanfare, no one to mourn him, no one to sing his praise. This is the way the world sees things.

But this is not the way that the Lord God sees things. He sees the heart. He sees faith in the heart, and it is that faith which saves and justifies us before the Lord God. All the material things of this world, all its grandeur and pomp, matter not if one does not have Moses and the prophets.

For Moses and the prophets proclaim the promise of the Messiah, the Christ. Both the certain rich man and Lazarus had Moses and the prophets. The certain rich man's five brothers also had Moses and the prophets. In them is found the promise of the Son of God come into the world to redeem mankind from their sins and trespasses. This is why we hear this Gospel reading on the Octave of the Feast of the Holy Trinity every year. It is a reminder to us that in the holy Scriptures is revealed to us the Triune Lord God Who has from before the foundation of the world has planned our salvation from sin, death, and the power of the devil. He has given us His holy Word as a means of grace to lead us into heaven. We can have all the things of this world, like the certain rich man, but still have nothing of importance, if we have not the Word of the Lord God. We can have all the riches of this life, but if we have not faith what our Triune Lord God has done for us poor, miserable sinners to redeem us from sin and death, we have nothing.

We need not live like Lazarus, the certain beggar, lived. We need not be destitute and starving, and full of sores. We can have the good gifts that our Lord God gives us in this world for our use and benefit. But let us not neglect the Word of the Lord God like the certain rich man did. For it is not our mammon, our earthly possessions that save us from the torments of Hades. It is faith in the works and merits of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. It is He Who is revealed to us through Moses and the prophets, and also is revealed to us through the Apostles and holy Evangelists. All of the holy Scriptures point us to our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ. Therefore, my dear friends, let us cling to Him in faith whether we have an abundance of earthly gifts, or whether we are lacking all earthly gifts, for our Lord promises us an eternal life in heaven, resting in comfort and peace in the loving arms of our heavenly Father. May the Triune Lord God grant this unto us all. 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 the 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!