

**Sermon on Luke 16:19-31 for 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost -10.20.19**  
**St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church – New Ulm, Minnesota – Pastor Nate Scharf**

Do you get paid what you are worth? Whether you are a farmer working long hours at harvest, a stay-at-home mom with two or three sick kids, a worker on the factory floor, a manager dealing with this that and the other problem, or a teacher, minister, doc or nurse it has a tendency to cross your minds, "Not enough for this!" We look at others and envy. We look at others and criticize – I have it tougher, do more, and the whine whirs on. If only I was rich! That would be the life! Jesus loves us enough to confront us. Jesus bids us look at our time here on earth and our purpose and how to use his blessings of money, vocation and time, and find true wealth.

**"Jesus gives us true wealth. This world does not."**

*"There was a certain rich man"* – Jesus used this scenario more than once as he taught. He knows the human heart and how enamored we are with wealth and power. He confronts this dream of ours and helps deliver us from it. *"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day."* Ok, dreamer, say you have it all – leisure enough to dress in clothes that would forbid you from doing anything that would get you dirty – so not a lot of work. You have enough money to spoil yourself every day. You are rich!

*"At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores."* Jesus mentions this man's name and doesn't mention the rich man's. Point taken. People argue whether this is a parable of Jesus or a real event, but either way what Jesus speaks lines up with what the rest of Scripture says about these realities and the afterlife. Lazarus was the epitome of a man in need. He was a beggar with a disease that produced open sores. It seems only the dogs felt sorry for him and licked his wounds bringing relief, or if that would cause pain, Lazarus was of such a plight that he couldn't keep these dogs away. On the one hand - Riches and pleasures and a life lived for that purpose. On the other hand, pitiful poverty and pain and no one easing it.

*"The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side."* He was delivered from this veil of tears and we hear nothing about his body – the diseased mess that he was – we hear only that he, Lazarus, was cared for by the angels and brought to Abraham's side – a beautiful term for heaven. Scripture tells us *"Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham"* (Galatians 3:7). Lazarus was a believer. He trusted the Scriptures, the Word of God, and looked forward to a Savior from sin and suffering. God delivered his child, Lazarus.

*"The rich man also died and was buried."* No angels. No *"Abraham's side"* mention here. Only that he was buried. The life spent on self, consumed with pleasure and ease ended with this man's burial. No doubt he had plenty of family and friends to bury him and wonderful things might have been said, but all we know is he died and was buried. This is the end of good things for someone who has been deceived by wealth and pleasure and made it their god and the goal of their life and effort.

*"In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'"* Hell hurts. It is separation from God and every blessing. It is agony and torment. From what Scripture says, we see that we will recognize each other when we reach our heavenly home. However, pity the people in hell.

In this life, even here at church, we have the water fountain, the tap water, the filtered water which is the taller spigot in the church kitchen, and finally we flavor the water and deliver it in 8oz. sips, 11oz. mug or just grab a carafe. The rich man was in such agony in hell that just the tip of the finger dipped in water and that amount placed on his tongue would bring ecstatic relief. Lord, keep us from such a place and keep us from falling into a lifestyle or mindset that would lead us there.

*"But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'"* Jesus spoke this story partially to the Pharisees and partially to the Pharisee inside each one of us. Luke 16:14ff tells us, *"The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, 'You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight.'"* Where are our hearts? Are they focused on the things of this

world – riches, glory, successes, pleasure, wealth? Or are they focused on God, our Savior, his will for us, love for Him and love for our neighbor? Whether we are the rich man or poor Lazarus, it matters.

*Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime...'* Now matters. Our lifetime matters. Three simple things set us apart already as the richest people of all time, "Access to Antibiotics, Access to automotive transportation, Indoor plumbing." But only God can bring true riches. What is my heart's goal? Is it godly or is it self-serving?

*"He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' "Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' " "No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"* This is typical of someone who set their hearts, effort and time on the things of this world and the pleasure it offers. They had no time for the Word of God: Moses and the Prophets – all of whom point out our sinful corruption and need for a Savior and how God was sending a Savior. The rich man, even in hell, still does not know the way of salvation. He thinks up a marvelous new means of grace. He thought, "Raise a dead man and then people will trust and believe." The rich man had five brothers, no doubt just like him, at least in his unbelief and focus on the things of this world. Even the unbeliever who goes to hell does not want others to have to suffer with him, but he still cannot trust the Way, the Truth and the Life – Jesus. The rich man has the gall to say, *"No, father Abraham."*

How could he? Better question is "How can we?" But we do. Someone is always preaching to us. It's not just this short 20 minutes on a Sunday morning. Every time we turn on the radio, watch something online or on television, every conversation we have, or even when we are alone with our thoughts. There is a battle of preachers going on. Even now as I preach, the devil starts in with the sermon about your to-do list, the diversions about what someone is wearing, where people are sitting, who's here and who's not, which preacher you like best, or think we'll ever go on that vacation, I wonder who will win today, and the list continues. And the thing is we listen to these sermons. And we buy in all too often. We elevate what the world thinks of as wise or worthy – power, money, leisure, entertainment and we lower what God sees as excellent and praiseworthy – time sitting at his feet learning from him as we hear, read and ponder his word, humility, self-sacrificing service to others, better to give than to receive, love for God and his Word, supporting his work, praying for others.

Like the rich man, the goal of our lives can quickly become the things of this world, how much we can gather for ourselves, always envying the person next to us who has just a little bit more. We ignore those who are in need because it would cost us some of our opportunities for earthly happiness, or our precious time. We ignore the Lord's work or his house because we've become consumers more than disciples. I'm sure the rich man had all the justifications why he was so wise and deserved what he had accumulated. And the world would agree. But those excuses didn't help Lazarus. God did. And the gifts God had given to the rich man, the rich man saw as deserved rights. And there is a part of us that does the same. Who will rescue us from ourselves?

*"Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'"* Listen with Lazarus. Moses and the Prophets spoke God's will and his way and man's failure and deep need for a Savior. God promised that Savior and confirmed it with prophecies that were fulfilled in Jesus and proved that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. Lazarus suffered greatly and the rich man could have helped ease his suffering physically, but he didn't. He failed because he did not use his riches in a godly way and wealth and pleasure became his god. The gifts God had given replaced him in the rich man's heart. Be warned by this Word as you listen with Lazarus. And look not at the gifts, but at the giver. Honor him in your use of wealth.

Lazarus looked forward to greater riches than the gates by which he lay. He was welcomed into heaven's gates because of the Savior who delivered – suffered, died and rose again for his forgiveness and eternal life. God gave Lazarus true wealth. The remedy for the rich man in all of us is to listen with Lazarus to God's Word and find that your wealth, your abilities, your time is a gift from your Savior God who gave himself for you to make you eternally rich and you are. God gives you these temporal, earthly gifts to honor him and serve one another. **Jesus gives true wealth. This world does not.** Amen.