

Sermon on the Rich Man and Poor Lazarus
Luke 16:19-31 ~ 10/25/2020

In the parable that we heard today about the rich man and poor Lazarus, why did the rich man go to Hell and why did poor Lazarus end up in the bosom of Abraham? Was it because one was rich and one was poor? No. The rich man was not judged because he was rich. The rich man was judged because he did absolutely nothing with any of his wealth to help those around him who were in need. A poor beggar full of sores lays at his doorstep, and the rich man just steps over him every day and ignores him. He is so blinded by his selfish pleasures, his parties, his banquets and all of his frivolities that he cannot see that a human being is at his door step and needs help. The rich man easily could have given Lazarus some kind of help without any kind of loss to his riches and money for good times. However, his heart is so frozen by selfish pleasure that he is incapable of even an ounce of sympathy or co-suffering love for another. Lazarus didn't go to heaven simply because he was poor. Lazarus was saved because he endured his sufferings with patience. We do not hear him complaining or cursing God. Lazarus was inches away from help and yet he silently suffered and persevered.

None of us here may be very wealthy, but all of us are called to share what we have with others, no matter how much or how little we have, it is still the responsibility of us all. Humanity has always been divided between the rich and the poor, and there has always existed a great chasm between the two. There are those who drive around in expensive vehicles and take vacations in executive suites in luxury hotels. There are others who line up at the bus stop waiting for their transportation to go home after work and others who stand by the gates of churches with open palms asking for help. It was like this a thousand years ago, during the earthly life of our Savior, and even though the world has changed in so many ways since then, this same situation exists even today. There is more than enough wealth in the world today so that no one should go hungry anywhere. No one anywhere should have to live in the street.

My favorite film version of the great story "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens was made in 1938 and starred the actor Reginald Owen who portrayed the character Ebenezer Scrooge. In the film Scrooge sees what will happen to him after he dies if he does not change his ways. While his corpse is still not yet completely cold and still lying on his death bed, hordes of people around him raid his house and steal everything from the curtains to the furniture to the dishes so that the corpse is lucky that at least the bed frame on which it is lying is still standing. You see, brothers and sisters, this story vividly illustrates the profound reality and truth that all of our possessions in this lifetime will either turn to rust or end up sitting on the mantelpiece of someone else's home who may not even know or remember who we were. All the parties and good times will dissipate into the air like smoke. The only thing that will accompany our naked rotting corpse will be the good things and mercy that we showed people in need. Love, care, sympathy, and sharing whatever we have with others. Sharing doesn't only mean money and material things. Sharing of ourselves by showing love, comfort, moral support, friendship, this is also how we can share with others. These are the things that we will take with us beyond the grave, and these are the things which will determine our fate, whether or not we will suffer in the fire and experience thirst and hunger and burn in the next life like the rich man, or whether we will be comforted in the bosom of Abraham like Lazarus. The rich man loses his soul so his name is not inscribed in the Book of Life. That is why in this parable the rich man is nameless. Lazarus, on the other hand, is saved, and we know his name, because it is recorded for all eternity in the Book of Life. May our names not be forgotten when we die. May our names be inscribed in the Book of Life and may our memory be eternal. Our material situation may be better or worse, our spiritual wealth may be great or small, but no matter what our personal situation may be, we are all required to share what we have with others. Amen.