

6.22.2025 Trinity 1 (Luke 16:19-31)

Throughout the Bible we come across examples which clearly illustrate the truth that the blessings God provides for us are not meant for us alone. Almighty God, the giver of *“every good and every perfect gift”* (James 1:17) blesses each and every one of us in countless ways, with so many gifts, that He intends for us to share with the world. For example, God created our first parents in His own *“image and likeness”* (Genesis 1:26), He blessed them with the gift of life and placed them in the Garden of Eden. The book of Genesis tells us that *“God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it...”* (Genesis 1:28).

In that passage we see God blessing the first man and the first woman, God working in them so that He could work through them, and expand the borders of Eden until His Garden covered the earth. As you know, humanity threw a wrench into His perfect plan, but fast forward to the time when God was working in and through another individual, a man named Abraham, and consider the words that God said to him. God told Abraham, *“I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea shore... And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed”* (Gen. 22:17-18). So again, we see God blessing a person, working in Abraham and then in his offspring, so that all the nations of the earth would be blessed, and such examples continue in the New Testament.

When Jesus called Andrew and Peter, He said to them, *“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men”* (Mt. 4:19). *Follow Me, and I will make you...* God is going to bless these men, and His other disciples, by making them into fishers of men. He’s going to work in them, so that He can work through them, and once again, expand His Kingdom to cover the earth. We recognize this blessing again at the end of Matthew’s Gospel when our Lord commissions His disciples to *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”* (Mt. 28:19-20). Jesus blessed the Apostles, and then told them to *Go* be a blessing to all nations. In these examples we learn that the many gifts and blessings God provides for every one of us, are not only about us. The life

that God gave to our first parents, the wealth and children, and children of children that God gave to Abraham, the gifts, abilities, and abundant life that Jesus provides for His disciples, all of these things are meant to be shared with the world that the Father gave the life of His only Son to save.

God has clearly revealed the truth that we are blessed to be a blessing, and in our New Testament lesson this morning, Jesus communicates the seriousness of that fact by pulling back the veil which separates this world from the next. In the passage we read today, our Lord and our God (John 20:28) allows us to see beyond this earthly life, and into the life to come. Jesus said, *“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom”* (Luke 16:19-23).

The story of the rich man and Lazarus is the most sobering reminder of the fact that the blessings God provides for each one of us aren't meant for us alone. When you picture the rich man in hell, and then try to think of the reason he ended up there, you won't be able to pin it on some heinous, unrepentant sin he continually committed that severed his relationship with God. The rich man isn't described as a thief, an adulterer, or a murderer. Nowhere does Jesus say that the man's heart was filled with envy, hatred, and malice. We may think of the rich man as suffering in hell because of such mortal sin, but in fact the sin that brought such torment upon him is a sin so often and easily committed by many of us today. It's the sin of living only for yourself, and only for this world.

The rich man had stored up all of his treasures on earth, *“where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal”* (Matthew 6:19). He had all the good things of this life, the gold and silver, the *purple and fine linen*, but he had no treasure stored in heaven. So, when death came suddenly, like a thief in the night, and stole all his earthly treasures, the rich man was left with nothing, because he hadn't chosen that good part which couldn't be taken

from him (Luke 10:42). He hadn't loved God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. He hadn't loved his neighbor, Lazarus, as himself. So this rich man, who was blessed by God to be a blessing, but instead chose to live for himself and do nothing to help his neighbor, was now in torment. He, who was so rich in this life, was now worse off than a beggar, for he'd gained the whole world, but lost his soul (Mark 8:36).

For those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus contains a powerful message that tears down walls of selfishness and sin, prison walls we construct that isolate us, separating us from the love of God and from the needs of our neighbor. When these walls are torn down by the grace of God, the light of Christ pours in, revealing the Truth, allowing us to see the riches we've hoarded, the blessings we haven't shared, and the wounded beggar at our own gate that we've despised and neglected. At last we see that the rich, without God, are bankrupt, and that those who appear to have nothing, if they have God, possess all things (2 Corinthians 6:10).

There's a lesson to be learned today, and this lesson comes from the world beyond the grave. People can say what they will about death and judgment, heaven and hell, but our Lord speaks the Truth about the afterlife with authority. The parable we read this morning proceeded from the mouth of God, and the lesson He teaches us about this life and the next, the Truth He speaks to rich men and women, to blessed men and women who live in the land of plenty is this: Don't overlook the beggar that lies at your gate. Don't waste your opportunity to do the will of God, because like Adam and Eve, Abraham and his children, Jesus' first disciples, and every person to whom God has given "*life and breath and everything...*" (Acts 17:25), you are blessed - blessed to be a blessing.