

6.14.2020 Trinity 1 (Luke 16:19-31) “Blessed to be a blessing”

Several months ago, at our Annual Meeting, we talked about some of the Biblical examples which clearly express 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. On the day of our meeting we talked about God creating our first parents in His own “*image and likeness*” (Genesis 1:26), blessing them with the gift of life and placing them in the Garden of Eden. The book of Genesis tells us that “*God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it...*” (Genesis 1:28).

In those verses we see God blessing the first man and the first woman, God working in them so that He could work through them and expand Eden to cover the earth. As you know we threw a wrench into that plan, but fast forward to the time when God was working in and through another individual, a man named Abraham, and remember 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 him and then in his offspring, so that all the nations of the earth will be blessed, and when we read the New Testament we find the same example.

When Jesus called His disciples, the first thing He said to them was “*Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men*” (Mt. 4:19). *Follow Me, and I will make you...* Think about that. God is going to bless these men by making them into fishers of men. He’s going to work in them, so that He can work through them, and expand His Kingdom to cover the earth. We see His 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). In every Biblical example 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 and the abilities 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 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 that 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. He isn't described as a thief, an adulterer, or a murderer. Nowhere does Jesus say that the man lied, cheated, or was filled with envy and hatred. We may think of the rich man as suffering in hell because of that kind of mortal sin, but in fact the sin that brought such torment upon him is a sin so often and easily committed by so many people 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 like a thief in the night, and stole all his earthly treasures, the rich man was left with nothing, for 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 Lazarus as himself. So this man, who was blessed 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).

The story of the rich man and Lazarus is for us both a window and a mirror. It's a window in the sense that it cuts a hole in the walls we put up, allowing the light of Christ to pour in, and us to see the Truth. We see this life, and the next, from God's perspective. We see objective right and wrong, love and hate, heaven and hell. We see that the rich man, without God, is bankrupt, and that the poor man, though it appears he has nothing, with God he possesses all things (2 Corinthians 6:10). This passage of Holy Scripture is a window, and a mirror. It's a mirror that allows us to take a close look at ourselves, a mirror that prevents us from deceiving ourselves. In this mirror we see the riches that we've hoarded, the blessings that we haven't shared, and the wounded beggar at our own gate that we've despised and neglected.

My friends, there's a lesson to be learned today, and this lesson comes from the world beyond the grave. People that are just like you and I can say what they will about death and judgment, heaven and hell, but our Lord speaks the Truth about the afterlife with authority. He knows what awaits us all, for He was with God in the beginning, He was God in the beginning. He lived, He died, He rose again after three days in the tomb, and He is seated at God's right hand in heaven (Ephesians 1:20). The words we heard this morning proceeded from the mouth of God, and the lesson He teaches us, the Truth He speaks to rich men and women, to blessed men and women, to those 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 to be a blessing.