



## **St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS**

**Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz  
Pentecost 19, October 3, 2010**

### **Luke 16:19-31**

#### *The Rich Man and Poor Lazarus*

<sup>19</sup>"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. <sup>20</sup>At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores <sup>21</sup>and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table.

Even the dogs came and licked his sores. <sup>22</sup>"The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup>In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. <sup>24</sup>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.' <sup>25</sup>"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. <sup>26</sup>And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' <sup>27</sup>"He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, <sup>28</sup>for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' <sup>29</sup>"Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' <sup>30</sup>" 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' <sup>31</sup>"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.' "

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

A very famous professional golfer is buying a new home for \$54.5 million dollars. It's two stories – white with a blue slate roof. It's about 9,000 square feet. Does that mean like 9,000 people shoulder to shoulder would fit in there? There is a huge parking lot, a glass green house, tennis courts, an oxygen therapy room, a fitness center. There are swimming pools! A kiddie pool, a lap pool, a dive pool, a reflection pool, a water fountain and a "lazy river" feature – so you can go floating down the river. And as if that wasn't enough water – a fire suppression system – if heaven forbid there's ever a fire! There must be lots and lots of bathrooms, too, with marble and shower sprayers everywhere – and a media room with a gi-normous flat screen high def – and surround sound and all recliner seating with built in refrigerators! There must be a whole bunch of workers, too, to landscape and make food and fix stuff! But what would all that be worth – if after 60 or 70 or 80 years – you spent eternity in eternal destruction? I have seen people living in the rain forest – who have homes made literally of mud – smeared on a bamboo frame – with lots and lots of palm fronds for a roof. There are no bathrooms, a small fire outside the home for cooking. The littlest children have no clothes. The small children wear a pair of gym shorts or an extra large T-shirt. The moms and dads have a shirt and shorts – no socks, no shoes. They wake up every morning hungry – and get up and look for something – anything to eat! They have no clean running water. They have literally practically nothing. But just wait! Just wait! One day they will be dressed in a robe of righteousness – that Jesus paid for with a sinless life and a tortured death. One day they will look more wonderful than words can describe – because they know that Jesus took all their sins away. Today we want to think about another of Jesus' teaching stories. We want to think about the only possible alternatives.

#### **Rich Man, Poor Man**

1. In life
2. and In eternity!

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on today – is from the Gospel of the Physician Luke. There are of course 4 Gospels – where there could have been just one account of Jesus' work to redeem us – one record including all the sermons and miracles – all the prophecies and fulfillments – that make up the record of Jesus' ministry. But God in his perfect wisdom gives us 4 Gospels. The Gospel of Matthew says again and again, **"For so it was written by the prophet:"** Matthew 2:5 People familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures would see again and again in Matthew how Jesus fulfilled all that was foretold in the law of Moses and the Psalms and the Prophets. The Gospel of Mark is very much to the point. Jesus is the Son of God. He came to do His Father's will to redeem us. Jesus is the Son of Man – true man through and through. Mark talks about hard hearts. He talks about the disciples' weaknesses – failures and painful mistakes. It is in Mark we read, **"Lord, I believe! Help me overcome my unbelief!"** The Gospel of Luke was written by a Physician – a medical doctor. Luke again and again talks about specific maladies – specific diseases. Luke describes the painful symptoms and the miraculous cures Jesus brought about. Luke also tells many of Jesus' parables – His earthly stories, earthly illustrations with heavenly meanings. This is where we remember hermeneutics! What is hermeneutics? – was the answer on *Jeopardy* the other day. Hermeneutics is the study of the principles – the presuppositions – the truths and beliefs that color our understanding of the Scriptures. Principles like – **All Scripture is God-breathed.** There are no contradictions in the Bible. We take literally those parts of Scripture that are literal and figuratively – those parts of Scripture that are figurative. Raining cats and dogs doesn't mean kittens and puppies are falling out of the sky. When Scripture says the sun stood still – the sun at the center of the solar system didn't stand still. You know what God's Word means. There was more time of day-light as God delivered Israel's enemies into her hands! All glory belongs to the LORD. In parables – very often there is a single point of comparison. We call it the tertium – the Kingdom of God is like something earthly in what respect? What is the point of comparison? What is the point? We don't believe that every single aspect – every single component in the story stands for something. When you approach parables that way – you get some pretty creative and some pretty out-there ideas. Look for the clear and simple point of the parable. What is Jesus trying to teach us?

Luke has lots of parables. Luke chapter 13. **"What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."** And again he said, **"To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened."** Luke 13:18-21 We read from the parable of the wedding feast. **"But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."** Luke 14:10,11 Remember last week – chapter 15? **"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?...The Parable of the Lost Coin. Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of heaven over one sinner who repents."** Then comes one of the most powerful parables of all – the *Parable of the Prodigal Son*. You can always come home! You can always come home to your Father – he still loves you! He forgives you! Last Sunday we read the parable of the shrewd manager. Remember?

Shrewd! Sometimes the people of this world – are *more shrewd* – more thoughtful – more clever – more shrewd than the children of light! That would be us! How can that be? Do you read the papers? Do you listen to the news? They did a survey – asked questions about the fundamentals of the 5 most popular faiths. They asked fundamentals about God’s Word. And you know who did better than people who called themselves Christians? Atheists – people who pay for signs that say, “*Enjoy life now. There is no afterlife!*” People who say there is no god! Better answers than Christians? Agnostics – people who say, “I don’t know if there is a God nor not! How can you know?” Better answers than Christians? Jewish people and Mormons – know more about our faith – our doctrine – our teaching – our Bible than we do? How can that be? It must be that they read the Bible and study it – and read books that explain the Bible! If we think that all the Scripture we need for a week or two or three fits on the back of a bulletin. If we don’t read our Bible or come to Bible Class or talk about God’s Word with our pastors and teachers – then it will continue to be true – that people who deny the truth of Scripture – actually know what the Bible says and what our Church teaches – better than the people who claim to believe it! The unbelieving world is not just laughing at us. That’s bad enough! I’m afraid – like David with Bathsheba – we give the ungodly an opportunity to mock God – to mock and scorn our Heavenly Father – when unbelievers know Scripture and doctrine and Church history better than we do!

Many people think the story of the rich man and poor Lazarus is a parable, too. But if you look carefully – *and we should* – it doesn’t say, “Then Jesus told this parable.” It doesn’t begin by saying, “What shall we compare the Kingdom of God to?” It says simply – there was a rich man... <sup>19</sup>**There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day.** <sup>20</sup>**At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores** <sup>21</sup>**and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.** The rich man – what was his name? It doesn’t even say. We can be happy not to know. The rich man could afford snooty latte’s, steak and lobster and Napoleon Brandy. Nice! All he worried about was being comfortable and having a good time. Not a particularly nasty person – he liked beer commercials that said, “You only go around once in life – so grab for all the gusto!” Life is short – enjoy the ride! And he did! People felt sorry for Lazarus. He was covered with painful sores – that puppies licked – to make him feel better. Lazarus was a dumpster diver. He barely got by. When he died people said – at least his suffering has ended. Rich man, poor man in this life – both eventually die!

<sup>22</sup>**The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side.** Lazarus died – and angels carried him home to Heaven! Again it is almost impossible to explain how wonderful heaven will be. We read the Scriptures from the Revelation to St. John at almost every single funeral. Revelation chapter 7 says, <sup>13</sup>**Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes – who are they, and where did they come from?"** <sup>14</sup>**I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.** <sup>15</sup>**Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.** <sup>16</sup>**Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat.** <sup>17</sup>**For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."** Imagine – no more tears – *ever!*

The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup>**In hell...he was in torment...** I have had jobs in the “*real world*” – where people mock the concept of hell. I once worked for a seed company – where one of the plastic hoop house/ green houses managers used to taunt me. “Tell me,” he would say, “when I get to hell – is it a moist heat or dry heat? The reason I ask is – if it’s moist heat I will want to be buried with African Violet seeds in my pocket – and if it’s dry heat – I will grow cacti!” He literally thought it a joke – that I was in college – big boy Sunday School – to learn how to scare people with how terrible hell would be! The month of October is my least favorite in this respect – for the next 28 days there will

be no end of trailers for scary movies — death and the occult. The fact is — as horrible and gross and terrible as these movies are. People literally clawing the ground as they are dragged into darkness screaming — the human mind cannot conceive of the wretched horror of hell. Isaiah said it clearly when he said, "**And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.**" Isaiah 66:24

<sup>27</sup>"He (*the rich man*) answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, <sup>28</sup>for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

<sup>29</sup>"Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' <sup>30</sup>"'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' <sup>31</sup>"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.' " We have **Moses and the Prophets!** We have God's Word! God's Word is *sufficient – powerful and effective!* Let me say that again. God's Word is *sufficient – powerful and effective!* It isn't dependent on the oratorical skill of the preacher or teacher! I have said before — some of the most powerful sermons I have ever heard — were not preached by people who were gifted and eloquent public speakers. Some of the most powerful sermons ever preached — were preached by shepherds and sycamore fig tree farmers — preached by uneducated fishermen and tax collectors. I have heard sermons by Pastors who literally lisp, stammered and stuttered — men who had trouble swallowing — or were so nervous they forgot to swallow. Men who forgot the "ly" on their adverbs — who said "I" when grammatically should have said "me" and said "me" when they should have said "I". And I have heard sermons by people in literally \$1,000 suits with hair sprayed styled hair on a stage with a literal orchestra and choir behind them — that were very entertaining — but not Scriptural! What's the point? Law and gospel — sin and grace — Christ crucified and risen are all that matter. When Jesus' forgiving love fills your heart — you are the richest person in the whole wide world. Jesus' forgiving love fills your heart — you have everything! Amen!

*To God alone all glory!*