

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST [c]

GOSPEL LESSON: LUKE 16:19-31 (A Sermon By Rev. Ron Friedrich)

19. One rich man dressed himself in purple and fine LINEN and feasted much every day.

20. And one poor man, named LAZARUS, lay in-front-of the rich man's door. And his body was full with SORES.

21. And he wanted to eat the CRUMBS from the rich man's table. Also the dogs came and LICKED his SORES.

22. Later the poor man died, and angels carried him to ABRAHAM'S arms. Also the rich man died and got buried.

23. And in HELL the rich man suffered much, and he looked-at ABRAHAM far-away and LAZARUS laying in Abraham's arms.

24. The rich man called, "Father Abraham, show mercy to me and send LAZARUS to dip-his-finger in water and cool my tongue, because I suffer here in this fire."

25. Abraham said to him, "Son, remember you received your good things during your life on earth, but LAZARUS received bad things. But now he is in comfort here, and you suffer there.

26. And also, God established a large separation between you and us. If a person wants to cross from here to you, he can't. And no one can cross from you to us."

27. Then the rich man said, "I beg you, father Abraham, send LAZARUS to my father's house.

28. Because I have five brothers. LAZARUS can warn them, and they will not come to this place of suffering."

29. ABRAHAM said, "Your brothers have MOSES and the prophets. Let your brothers believe those words."

30. But the rich man answered, "No, father ABRAHAM, but if one arises from the dead and goes to them, then my brothers will REPENT."

31. But ABRAHAM said to him, 'If they refuse to believe MOSES and the prophets, then they will not believe if one arises from the dead."

SERMON

A STORY:

Several years ago, a pastor from England came to America. He went to a Christian conference [meeting] in Southern California -- Los Angeles. Their conference had Saturday afternoon free time, so people could see the community.

The pastor rode on a bus that toured various places around LA. They stopped one place to visit the church mission in a poor area in the city.

The pastor notice how his friends expressed pity for those poor people. The pastor heard many people say,

"Oh, those poor people really need Christ!"

Later the bus TOUR went through the rich area in LA -- BEVERLY HILLS, where the movie stars live. The pastor noticed that his members were impressed.

"Look-at those big houses! Wow! Fancy!"

The pastor also noticed that not one of those Christians expressed pity for the rich people. No one said,

"Oh, those rich people really need Christ!"

We people evaluate each-other, looking-at the outside of our bodies --

how people look,
how they dress,
how smart they are,
how athletic they are.
what profession they have,
how they use language,
where they live...

The Bible says that those things are not important to God.
God says,

*"You only see people on the outside,
but I see the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)*

The Bible especially warns us: Don't become jealous about people with power, or people with wealth. (*Proverbs*)

In today's story, if we can really meet those two men in the beginning of the story,

we want to become friends with one man,
and we feel uncomfortable with the other man.

Which?

We naturally feel comfortable with the Rich Man,
and we want to avoid Lazarus.

One thing the Bible often teaches us:

The way that we naturally think is often wrong.
Our human heart is ruined with sin.

God says:

*"My thoughts are not your thoughts.
Your ways are not My ways" (Isaiah 55:8)*

Maybe you have[finish] seen the bumper sticker, and the bracelets that say:

"W. W. J. D." -- *What would Jesus Do?*

That question helps us stop, think, and remember to be-doing as Jesus does. But we have a problem. We can't act same-as Jesus. Only Jesus can act as Jesus.

Only if Christ lives in us through His Holy Spirit,
giving us His thoughts,
changing us inside,
helping us show His character,
only if we die for ourselves,
and Christ lives through us,
then we begin to see what Jesus sees.
We begin to see people and not things.
We see their eternal souls are more important
than our physical comfort.

In our story today, we see the two men.
Both men have serious needs.
One man needs health for his body.
The other man needs life for his soul.

Maybe we can also see, and what we need most,
not things,
not physical health.
We need eternal life for our souls.

How do we get that?
How do we get eternal life?

Yes, trust Jesus.
If we understand that we can't save ourselves,
then we have hope.
God gives eternal life,
free to you,
no charge to you.
Who paid?

Yes, Jesus paid. He suffered and died for us.
Now we can live forever.

And Jesus resurrected from death to life again.
That proves that the price Jesus paid is enough,
and now heaven is open for us.

The Rich Man in the story misunderstood many things.

First, on earth the Rich Man thought that having many things was important.

Wrong. In God's view, Lazarus was really rich,
and the rich man was really poor.

Second, the rich man thought that what happens after we die,
does not matter, and is not important.

Wrong again.

Life on earth is really short.

Then we die.

Then what happens?

That's important. Why?

Because where we live next, hell or heaven, that is forever!

The rich man learned, too late.

Jesus clearly teaches: After we die, we have no second chance.

The story tells us that the Rich Man refused to believe God's Word. Maybe the rich man thought same-as many people believe today: "*There is no hell.*"

Wrong. Jesus is very clear about that.

Or maybe the Rich Man didn't-care about hell, and he thought as many do today, "*Hell will be fun!*" Really? The Rich Man learned the truth, too late.

Some Christian people also believe that when we die,
our souls sleep until Jesus comes again.

Wrong. Jesus is very clear, again and again.
When we die, we immediately go to our eternal home,
hell or heaven.

The Rich Man in our story learned that the hard way.

Third, the Rich Man thought people could travel between heaven
and hell.

Wrong. The home you choose, you stay there forever.

Fourth, the Rich Man thought people who died can go back to
earth as ghosts. Did you notice in the story?

*Then the rich man said, "I beg you, father ABRAHAM, send
LAZARUS to my father's house. Because I have five
brothers. Then he can warn them, and they will not come to
this place of suffering."*

The Rich Man's idea was what? He wanted Lazarus to go back
as a ghost and scare the five brothers, and they will begin to act
good, and go to heaven.

Wrong again!

God does not send people back as ghosts.

If people see "ghosts," what they see are not dead people.

The "ghosts" are really evil angels acting as dead people.

The evil angels hope to fool us,

leading us to doubt (not-believe) God and His Word.

Anyway, if that rich man's five brothers change and start "acting good," that can't save them. That way always fails. How can they be saved? Jesus tells us in the story:

ABRAHAM said, "Your brothers have MOSES and the prophets. Let your brothers hear those words."

But the Rich Man answered, "No, father ABRAHAM, but if one arises from the dead and goes to them, then my brothers will REPENT."

But ABRAHAM said to him, 'If they refuse to believe MOSES and the prophets, then they will not believe if one arises from the dead.'

You, see, Some One DID rise from the dead: Jesus!
People who trust Him,
they also believe all that God says about Jesus
in His Word, the Bible.

We can also trust Him, and not postpone.
We can also trust Him now.

We pray:

*Lord Jesus, we are sorry, because we love this world too much.
We often love things, more than we love you.
We worry more about life now than life forever.
Forgive us. Help us.
Then we can more clearly understand Your Word.
Then we can trust you more.
We die now for You.
Please, You come and live in us now.
Amen.*

Notes:
Brisco in LA.

Outward standards for evaluation.

God sees the heart (1 Samuel 16:7)

Our natural attraction to... Lazarus? or the rich man? WWJD?

Christ in us.... sees people, not things.
...their eternal souls vs our physical comfort.
What we need most?
How we get that?

Rich man's misunderstanding:

(1) having many things is important.

(2) what happens after we die is not important.

"There is no hell." "All people go to heaven."

"Hell will be fun!" "Soul sleep"

(3) Travel between heaven and hell.

The home you choose, you stay there forever.

(4) ghosts

(5) changed behavior changes eternal destiny