

The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 21)

Year of the Lord 2019

Luke 17

**“Holy Spirit, Light Divine, shine upon this heart of mine;
Chase the shades of night away; turn the darkness into day!”
“Let me see my Savior’s face; let me all HIS beauties trace!
Show those glorious truths to me which are only known to
Thee!”**

Luke 16:19–31 [Jesus said:] “There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’ And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house—for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

In the Name of Jesus:

Dear Christians, the following is the only word of pardon your poor pastor can find in this whole account:

“The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side.”

Jesus had JUST SAID—last week’s Gospel lesson: **“For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”**

The converse is proven by this story: Lazarus, the abomination among men, has been exalted in the sight of God.

All these lessons hearken back to the grumbling of our betters, the superior and elite among us: “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them!”

If we tie all the lessons together, what do we get? Lazarus was a sinner. Feasting companion of father Abraham; light burden of angels.

The word ‘parable’ or ‘story’ does not occur in this account. It sounds to me like something Mary’s Boy, Jesus, had seen with His own Eyes.

This explains your poor pastor’s nightmares all week long.

There is a satirical account from about the time of the early Church about the manners, among the Romans, of the nouveau riche—those previously poor, but then landing into more money than they can spend. At one sickening dinner display, while the most disgusting leader of the feast wipes his hands on the hair of a slave-boy—as a napkin—others use loaves of bread, torn apart, as napkins for themselves; then throw them behind them to the floor.

A vivid picture of what caused the rugby scrum between Lazarus and the dogs. The smart people who write books about the Bible books say that Lazarus probably DID get some such scraps; cast-off crumbs for a cast-off man; until the angels carried him with heavenly good cheer.

My dear ones: if this lesson frightens you, I welcome you to your pastor’s club! And I declare to y’all now: if this lesson frightens

you into finding some of those fellas whose job it is to endanger us highway drivers and distract us with the boasts of poverty; and you want to throw some scraps to them—a couple dollars, SPARE change—then all you are going to do, WITH ME, is confirm your place with the nameless rich man. ‘What can I SPARE?’

(‘There are so many churches, so many preachers, who will make me FEEL GOOD about myself in this town! WHY did I decide to come here? Again?!’)

(You, dear Lutheran, did NOT decide anything about your standing with your God; your admissibility to the bosom of Abraham. And—rejoice, dear Lutheran!—you never shall!)

Until the angels come for us, Moses and the prophets will have their place. Their place is what Jesus took when He related these events that He saw. D...E...M...O...L...I...S...H...I...N...G A...N...Y pretence, show, false prop, idol, in which any man could trust: beyond the mercy of God delivered in this age, among the beggars and the dogs.

There WAS—and there still IS—a rough correspondence between obedience to the Law of Moses and a peaceful, fulfilled, healthy life in this age. The LORD Himself had pledged, through Moses and the prophets, that the gifts of THIS AGE were given Israel purely as gifts from heaven—WITHOUT REGARD to the worthiness or unworthiness of the people God had chosen: Abraham, and all his children.

But Moses and the prophets pledged the threat of bitter punishment and death in this world—and beyond—when even the chosen of God would take gifts, pretend they are THEIR OWN, THEIR DUE, and then boast with word or action: fine purple, woven air clothing, feasting—not daily bread, this day; that’s for NAPKINS! And, the Lord Jesus teaches us, the object of OUR PRAYER, His prayer, dear disciples. ‘This day; bread for the day; along with the forgiveness of all our sins.’

Mary's Boy, Jesus, name-drops Moses, sets the seating for Abraham's feast, even describes the rich man where we all DESERVE to end up: anguish, flame, bitterness.

He also ate and drank with tax collectors—notorious for skimming and taking advantage of their countrymen; and sinners—those who admit themselves—see Peter at the great catch of fish!—that they know very well what Moses demands; but they are not yet fully engaged, no matter how anxious their conscience.

Where did the Reporter of these events end up Himself? Hades too; the realm of all the dead! And before that, anguish:

³³ And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴ And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. ³⁵¹

And now, HE has come from the dead, out of the dead—WAS dead, but now, is Created Anew! And He pledges to us what Moses could only desire to fall from Abraham's feast: the DIVORCE, the CANCELLATION of ANY CORRESPONDENCE between obedience to Moses, and the gifts sent from heaven; now, sent even from Hades.

Check the manger; check the empty tomb; check the witness of the apostles, who speak a word Moses and the prophets could not know!

Saint Luke records that when the women reported the tomb empty and the declaration that One INDEED had come from the dead, Abraham was seconded! The apostles themselves—not only did they not BELIEVE! They were not even, Father Abraham's word: they were not even CONVINCED!

What DID convince them? Whence their BELIEF?

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Lk 23:33–35). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

I am so happy to be a Lutheran! Even I am saved for certain!
Even your poor pastor!

‘The Lord has risen. HE APPEARED TO SIMON!’ NOT the
Simon who bore the cross. The OTHER Simon. Thanks be to
God!

⁵⁶ Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, “This man also was with him.” ⁵⁷ But he denied it, saying, “Woman, I do not know him.” ⁵⁸ And a little later someone else saw him and said, “You also are one of them.” But Peter said, “Man, I am not.” ⁵⁹ And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, “Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean.” ⁶⁰ But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.” And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹ And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.” ⁶² And he went out and wept bitterly. ²

He appeared to Simon to turn the man from what HE had to offer
Jesus; TO what Jesus is, the offering to Simon!

He appeared to Simon so that Simon could strengthen the brethren:
even you; even me!

He appeared to Simon, to reserve our seat! In this age, beggars,
whose daily bread is scraps and forgiveness. In the age to come:
in the sight of God, exalted!

Why wait? This poor man cannot imagine a feast that can satisfy
like the Lord’s Body and Blood. That age, bursting with life into
this age! And who is exalted here? The beggars of this world, in
the Name of Jesus. Amen.

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Lk 22:56–62). Wheaton, IL:
Crossway Bibles.