

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Dearly beloved,

The account before us was told by Jesus to those who justified themselves before men,
but cared nothing of being justified by God.

Men exalting what is an abomination in the sight of God and ridiculing Him to His face.

And lovers of money. Luke16:14-15

Jesus told them of the rich man and Lazarus in order to warn them and lead them to repentance,
that they might recognize that what they were esteeming in this life, what they were seeking after,
would not benefit them after death;

that they might recognize that what they held of little esteem was essential for eternal life.

May we take warning and repent, so that we desire not to justify ourselves,

but to be justified by God and exalted by Christ in His eyes.

We read as follows in Jesus' name:

[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. ...

"And [the rich man] said, 'Then I beg you, father [Abraham], to send [Lazarus] 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.' ...

"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.'" (ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

The rich man and Lazarus are extreme opposites, aren't they?

The rich man was able to provide everything for himself. Literally, for himself.

While Lazarus couldn't even get himself to the rich man's gate but had to be laid there by others.

The rich man was covered in fine, purple linen, while Lazarus was covered in sores.

The rich man feasted sumptuously, while Lazarus desired even the rich man's table scraps.

The rich man is not credited with showing any mercy or love,

while Lazarus is shown mercy only by the dogs licking his sores.

Even after their deaths, the contrasts are still a major point of the account.

The rich man died, was buried. and we find him in Hades, that is hell, being in eternal torments,

while Lazarus was lovingly carried by the angels to Abraham's side, to heaven, and was comforted.

So why were their roles reversed after death?

Was it because the rich man had the vice of being wealthy?

Or that Lazarus had the virtue of being poor?

Was this account spoken to the Pharisees because Jesus would have them be aware

of the social and economic injustice and desired that they start working for economic equality?

Such a conclusion would interpret this account as rather shallow and contradictory to Scripture,

since there have been many extremely wealthy people who have entered heaven, such as Abraham himself and Job, Isaac and Jacob, David and Solomon, to name a few, and many poor people who have entered hell.

We see the answer toward the end of the account in the exchange that Abraham has with the rich man. The rich man pleads with Abraham to send Lazarus to his 5 brothers so that they might repent. He believes that such a resurrection from the dead would awaken faith in them. But when Abraham points out that they have Moses and the prophets, that is Holy Scripture, the rich man is not convinced that God's Word is sufficient enough to save them. And so we see that the rich man had a low estimation of God's Word and its power to touch the heart. Instead, he believed that some miraculous sign or wonder would awaken faith in his brothers, which at least implies that he thought that such a sign to him would have given him faith. And so in essence, he is blaming God for his unrepentance since he was not given such a sign.

On the other hand, Lazarus patiently bore with his many difficulties in this life, holding on to the promises that he had been given regarding eternal life in Scripture. He didn't hold himself as judge over Moses & the Prophets, but believed God's Word through them. Lazarus cherished and highly valued this heavenly treasure over his earthly comfort/discomfort.

Again, Jesus told this account **to those who loved money and exalted what is an abomination in the sight of God.**

But is this an account that needs to be heard only by the Pharisees of Jesus' day, or do we also need to hear it?

Whether you identify as rich or poor or middle class, this text is for you because it isn't about your economic status but about what is treasured in your heart, not only in word, but also in truth, for God sees the heart of men. He sees your heart. Your Lord is warning the miser, as well as the spendthrift.

The poor and middle class can be allured by earthly treasures just as easily as the rich. In fact, even the general comforts and ease in our day and culture that the poor are expected to have can just as easily entice our hearts away from our true heavenly treasures. The constant cry of the advertisers that you deserve their product or your leisure is a call of the mythological sirens. The entertainment industries are a constant barrage for your attention and money. And then, having your undivided attention demand that you ignore your moral inhibitions to watch their content, They are even catechizing your children in evil through "educational" programming.

And judging from human history, the indulgence of our earthly comfort will cause many Christians to stumble as the world continues to entice and allure, making it ever so easy to spend your money selfishly while ignoring the needs of your neighbor; making it ever so uncomfortable for you to be a Christian and get/keep a good paying job while maintaining a clean conscience.

But our earthly comforts are temporary, as the rich man found out.

While he was rich and comforted in his earthly life, he was poor and tormented in eternal death, so much so that he begged for even just a drop of water on his tongue.

So was his suffering in **the fire is not quenched.** ^{Mark9:48}

...

And just as true, earthly pains and sufferings and griefs and trials and struggles are also temporary for God's children.

Lazarus suffered greatly during his earthly life, not only ill health, but with lameness, as well as poverty and the humiliation of begging.

But all this came to an end when he died and was taken by the angels to Abraham's side.

Then, as Abraham said, he was comforted, and eternally so.

...

There is another contrast that is unique to this account given by Jesus.

While the world remembers the names of the rich and famous, at least for a decade or two, or at least a news cycle or two, and forgets, or pays little attention to the poor and needy, it is as if Jesus does not even know/remember the rich man's name.

That is, the Lord doesn't recognize the rich man because his name is not written in the Book of Life.

On the other hand, only Lazarus is ever named among the teaching accounts that Jesus told.

Lazarus, coming from the Hebrew "Eleazar," meaning: "the Lord is my help", Jesus does know.

His name, along with Abraham's, is known and remembered by the Lord.

And while Lazarus was humbled by his sin,

he did not consider it to be humiliating to beg for mercy from his Savior.

He knew where his help came from.

God's mercy and grace were his joy. With these, he could be content no matter what he endured.

Jesus' suffering and death were his comfort in the midst of his earthly torments

because he knew that Jesus' suffering was what he truly deserved for his sin

and Jesus' death was truly the wages he had earned.

He was content to receive whatever earthly lot the Lord gave to him, even if only suffering,

because he knew his heavenly inheritance was awaiting him.

Dear fellow redeemed,

The Lord knows your heart.

That is why He warns you about it and teaches you about His Son, Jesus Christ.

That is why He has baptized you, to cleanse your heart from its idols and worldly enticements.

That is why He has called you by name in Holy Baptism, and what is more, called you by His name, making you an heir of eternal life and all its comforts and joys.

The Lord knows your heart...

and how easily it is distracted by what it sees and forgets what it cannot see.

That is why He continues to call you in repentance by His Word to daily die to yourself

and rise to new life in Christ, your help and Savior.

The Lord knows your heart...

that it is weak and easily grows faint and weary of the constant watching and struggles and trials.

That is why He gives you the most precious treasure in heaven and on earth in Holy Communion.

There He gives you what no silver or gold or precious gems in all the world could afford,

He gives you the Body that suffered the thirst and torments of hell for you as it hung on the cross,
and the Blood of Jesus that was poured out for you for the remission of your sins,
to refresh your parched soul.

You do not need to justify yourself before men.

You do not need, nor should you seek, this world's approval,
for the **world exalts what is an abomination in the sight of God,**
esteeming only what it can see, while despising God's Word.

Instead, you are justified by God through Christ Jesus your Lord, your Helper,
and are comforted, having been given a clean heart here in this life,
and looking forward to being taken by the angels to be exalted in heaven,
there to reign with Jesus in eternal comforts.

In Jesus name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria