

Luke 16:19-31

“Heaven”

September 25, 2016

We live in a world that is consumed by its needs, wants and desires. Most of us are blessed with long lives and therefore we don't think about death and life beyond death. Our society is becoming like the rich man in our text. He enjoyed his life until he died. He had no concern for those around him like Lazarus who was placed at the gate of his home to beg because he could not support himself. Both the rich man and Lazarus died. The rich man in his selfishness went to hell. Lazarus went to heaven to be comforted by Father Abraham.

Like the rich man, our world has no time for God. In fact most of our society acts if they no longer believe in God. We read in the paper about the latest corruption arrest in the political world. Don't they think that they will get caught? We see the professional agitators going around from city to city causing riots. What kind of future do they see for themselves? Our youth go off to college and party and then drop out the first or second year. Youth and adults turn to drugs for their high as if there is no future. If all of those focused upon the present continue on that path there will be no future except the one facing the rich man.

Meanwhile Lazarus is in heaven. Notice that his life upon this earth was not an easy life. That says because we believe in God nothing bad will happen to us.

Lately I have been hitting my head against the wall that says in Christ we will have an easy life. God did not fix my problem so I don't believe in Him. God allowed terrible things to happen to me and so I don't believe in Him. The church and those in the church mistreated me and so I don't go there anymore. I could go on and on with the reasons that those who have hard times think God does not love them. Lazarus in our text could have done the same, but he chose to trust God with his future and he was blessed with heaven.

Notice that the rich man was in hell and Lazarus was in heaven before Judgment Day. Yes, their bodies were in the grave, but the suffering of the rich man had already begun and the blessings for Lazarus had already begun. We have the ups and downs of life to endure while we wait for the blessings of heaven to come. We have to keep our focus upon the hope of eternity as we face life. In fact the good times are often a distraction which the rich man can testify to us. We become consumed with enjoying the rich times and lose our sense of God.

We live in a world that uses guilt to get its way. I need to feel guilt because I have a better life than you do. Then I need to ease my guilt by giving from my wealth to you. I need to feel guilt because my ancestor once held your ancestors in slavery. Then I need to ease my guilt by allowing you to discriminate against me. We live in Christ's undeserved grace and mercy. On the Cross at Calvary, Christ paid for our sins. We no longer should live in guilt. Nor should we make amends

for the sins of others. We do the best to make amends for our own sin, but out of love not out of guilt. We do the best to help the Lazarus' of this world but out of love for Christ not because we feel guilty because of their situation in contrast to our wealth.

We are Christians who not only look to the future awaiting us, but we are blessed with the undeserved grace and mercy of our God. He teaches us how to live and love in a way that brings us greater peace in this world of turmoil. We don't have to go on a crusade and right the wrongs that surround us. Instead we do our best to love God above all things and to love our neighbor as our self. We will fail again and again and find His undeserved grace and mercy. This world, this church and our families are hospitals for sinners not a rest home for saints. Therefore we allow His undeserved grace and mercy rather than guilt to run our lives and our relationships with those around us.

The rich man's life was run by his needs, wants and desires. It gained him blessings in this life but ended up condemning him to hell. Lazarus' life was run by his love for God. It did not gain him blessings in this life, but gained him blessings in heaven. The rich man's life was run by his needs, wants and desires. Our lives should be run by God's undeserved grace and mercy rather than guilt and pleasure. We will find peace and contentment through Christ that cannot be found in the pleasures of this moment. Amen.