

The 16th Sunday after Pentecost

“One’s master’s final reveal”

Luke 16:22-23

September 28, 2025

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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 16th Sunday after Pentecost is from Luke 16:22-23.

“22 So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

So far the text:

In all the parables that Jesus spoke, He never mentioned anyone by name. In this accounting of two people, a rich man and a beggar, Jesus does tell the name of the beggar, Lazarus, which means, “he whom God helps”. For this reason, along with other details of this story, including the naming of Abraham, Luther believed this story to be historical and not a parable.

Whether historical or a parable, the truths spoken by Jesus build upon the parable of the unjust steward that we heard last week in the beginning of this chapter 16. At the conclusion, Jesus laid out the bottom line for all people: **“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”** Mammon is the avarice and greed for the riches of this life which becomes one’s god, one’s idol, and one’s master.

Riches and material wealth are of course gifts from God which we are not to trust in, but certainly He gives them for our enjoyment as we heard in our epistle reading from 1 Timothy 6. **“17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.”**

As Paul says to Timothy also in chapter 6: **“6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.”**

There is contentment in knowing that God does provide our daily bread, even without our asking. A Christian gives thanks to God at all times, in wealth and in material poorness because God will never forsake us. He has given us the riches of our salvation through Jesus Christ and our eternal inheritance of riches in heaven through His death and resurrection!

But temporal riches can also become one’s master and idol if one sets one’s heart upon it, clings to it, and finds all one’s joy, desire, and pleasure in it. As Paul writes in our epistle from 1 Timothy 6: **“10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”**

The love of money not money itself pierces one with many sorrows for it can never give the true contentment that God alone gives in Jesus.

Back to Luke 16...

14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him.

The Pharisees heard the Word of God from Jesus’ lips but derided Him. They had made money their god. They sought the approval of man instead of the One true God. And so Jesus continued by telling the account of the rich man and Lazarus. Jesus wanted to convict them with the truth of God’s Word so that they would repent before it was too late and believe in Him. He reveals what each master gives at the end...Lovers of money – eternal torment in hell...believers in Jesus – eternal riches in heaven.

Jesus loves all people as we heard in 1 Timothy 2 last Sunday and desires no one to go to hell.

“who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time”

God's Word reveals who one's master is...Jesus or the idol of one's choosing. The unjust steward's stealing and then shrewdness of using money to gain for himself temporal friends revealed who his master was...mammon. And the rich man who cared only about himself and "his good things" also revealed that it was his master.

For did the rich man confess like Thomas, "My Lord and My God!" No, he trusted in "his good things". His confession was "my good things, and my good things!" As we heard in Psalm 146 earlier: **"Do not put your trust in princes, Nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help. 4 His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; In that very day his plans perish."**

The unbeliever puts his trust not in the true God, but in "his" earth...the temporal things of this earth, whether they are people or material things. In them there is no help. If one follows this master, one's plans perish eternally along with one's soul.

But the Psalmist next tells us where true blessedness is found.

"Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, 6 Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; Who keeps truth forever, 7 Who executes justice for the oppressed, Who gives food to the hungry. The Lord gives freedom to the prisoners."

And Lazarus was helped by God in whom he put his trust.

How was God helping Lazarus? He seemed to have a very hard life. He was born with some disability so that he couldn't walk or earn a living. How was he helped? Jesus says that he was carried to the gate of a rich man by those who cared for him that he might get assistance from those who came by...hopefully by the rich man who ate very well and had the best clothing. Lazarus desired to have the crumbs from the rich man's table.

How was God helping Lazarus? God sent him dogs as companions, therapy dogs if you will. They were more merciful than the rich man. And they did the best they could to help him with his sores. Though not the preferred practice, canine saliva does have some antiseptic properties.

But most of all God helped Lazarus by helping him fight the good fight of keeping the faith in the face of hardships as our epistle reading says.

“12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

And when Lazarus died, His Master, the One True God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, gave him the final reveal. For an embassy of angels came to carry his spirit to heaven where Lazarus there enjoys eternal bliss. Gone was his temporal suffering and disability as he now enjoys all the riches of heaven at Abraham's side.

For the rich heathen man, his master – mammon – revealed a dastardly ending. Mammon had coddled him in his brief earthly life. It made the rich man feel like he had no worries, no need of anyone. He thought this “good” living would just go on forever. But it didn't. For all men must die and face the consequences of sin. The rich man died as did Lazarus. But then came the awful truth from this master – mammon.

Temporal riches cannot remove man's most pressing need – sin. And if it is not removed by trusting in the ransom paid by Jesus, there is justice. An eternal punishment for sin is meted out. If one forsakes the blood of Jesus and His punishment for all people, then one must face one's punishment on one's own. That is the truth that the master – mammon – so shrewdly hides.

And that punishment is unbearable...flames and painful torment and thirst...eternally...never ending. Just a drop of water for my tongue pleaded the rich man. But not even this comfort is given in hell. There is an abyss that separates all evil from heaven and there is no crossing over. There are no second chances, no do overs, no mulligans, no prayer that can change the torments of the unbeliever in hell.

When the rich man realizes this, he asks that Lazarus be sent to warn his brothers so that they would do what he never did – repent. They have Moses and Prophets, replied Abraham. Let them hear them. God's true Word of Law and Gospel. All the truths of heaven and hell and redemption in Jesus are there and proclaimed and available for all to hear and believe. They are hear for all of us to hear and believe and constantly be reminded of our unworthiness. But most of all, God's Word reveals His mercy, His shrewd plan of salvation of sending His only begotten Son to suffer all, die and rise again so that the Law cannot condemn a repentant believer in Jesus. The Law has lost its sting.

As we heard two weeks ago, Paul makes this declaration which is our confession also.

“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 16 However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.” (1 Timothy 1:15-16)

Thanks be to God that we have His Word, His revealed plan of salvation. And God graciously gives with His Word the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper to seal our faith, and strengthen it. The very body and blood of Jesus speaks forgiveness to our hearts and we find contentment, happiness and riches of knowing that we are forgiven and heirs of heaven.

Whatever our lot, while we have breath, we praise the Lord as the Psalmist says. For He has indeed given us the righteousness that avails before God. And when He calls us home we too by the grace of God alone, will be carried by the angels to Abraham’s side and enjoy eternal bliss forever. All Praise to the Triune God now and forever! Amen!

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)