

In the Name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The Kingdom of God is not like the kingdom of men. To men, the rich man in our Lord's parable would be the man of importance. He was successful. He was well clothed and well fed. He was a man of influence. By the metric of the fallen world, he had acquired what all men want. In this fallen world men spend their lives and their energies striving for power and control, giving everything to be like the rich man. They do anything: lie, cheat, steal; to avoid being like Lazarus - a beggar, covered in sores, hungry, ashamed.

But in hell it is not Lazarus that begs. It is the so-called rich man. Fear involves torment. He pleads for but a drop of water, but can never receive it. His torment knows no end. He is rich no more. Nor was he ever rich, truth be told. For he had not love. The truth was exposed when the fires of judgment melted away his gold and his fine clothing. And what was left, his pride, could not stand before God. In fact, in the parable our Lord never names the rich man. He is simply called rich. His name is unimportant. It is not written in the Book of Life. His greed has made him only fodder for the eternal flame.

Having money is not a sin. Indeed, it is a gift of God. Abraham, the father of the faithful, who enjoys Paradise, is among the richest of men in the Bible. But now Lazarus is as rich as Abraham. They both enjoy eternal bliss. For the Kingdom of God is not like the kingdom of men. God's economy is one of grace. And stepping over a beggar at your gate, closing your ears to the voice of the hungry, lifting your expensive clothing to avoid soiling it on the rags of the sick and the poor, parading about in exaggerated self importance, pursuing wealth while hardening your heart to the tribulations of your neighbor, are signs of bankruptcy in the economy of God's grace. Faith cannot do such things.

Pride can. Greed can. Ego can. High self-opinion and stiff-necked conceit can. But on the last day, the fires of judgment will reveal who you really are. The veneer of politeness and caring that you have donned will be burnt away. The flimsy mask of religiosity and altruism will not stand against the consuming fire of God's presence.

So what of you will remain for the Lord to see? Will he see in you the humble, faithful heart of Lazarus? Or will you stand before God on the last day, the trappings of this world torn away, more like that rich man? Repent, lest you find yourself on the fiery side of that great chasm that no man can traverse.

Repent. You have Moses and the Prophets. Hear them. In them is the answer, the key, to eternal life. See the perfect Man that they describe, the One who keeps God's commands, the One who is pure of heart, the One who truly loves His neighbor, the One whose worship is devout and right. See the One whose holiness is perfect. See the True Israel that loved the Lord God with all His heart, all His soul, and all His strength.

For as Moses and the Prophets testify, as the Evangelists and Apostles confess, the love of God is manifest in Him. And that love is perfected among us. That love is perfected in you. For

believing in Him, believing in the Perfect One that fulfills the Law, believing in Jesus Christ, you may have boldness in the day of judgment. For He is Love. And there is no fear in love.

It is Christ, the center of Moses and the Prophets, the Lord of Moses and the Prophets, that was truly rich. For His were the eternal riches of heaven from before the foundation of the world. But for you He made Himself poor. He hungered, fasting forty days and forty nights. Although angel hosts were once His footstool, He had nowhere to lay His head. He was covered with sores as the scourge did its' terrible work.

He lay, not at the rich man's gate, but at the very gate of hell, nailed to the cross. He died as the most selfish, most proud, least caring idolater of all time, for He died bearing your sins. And they made His grave with the wicked, with the rich at His death. In that garden tomb The Son of Man had a place to lay His head, but still it was borrowed.

What the rich man pleaded to be allowed to do but could not, what no sinner could ever do, the Christ did. He rose from the dead. He traversed that ancient chasm to open the way for you. He took up His life again. He conquered the sin you could not. He defeated the devil for you. He lay death in the tomb and sealed it away forever, that you might live. He preached His victory in hell, and then claimed His rightful throne in heaven. In this the love of God is manifest toward us, that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

For God sent His Son to be the propitiation for your sins, which you are freely given in the font of forgiveness and life. It is there, in the font, at the gate of heaven, He places on you the finest of vestments - His holiness. And where there is holiness, there does the Spirit of God dwell. So do we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

You have Moses and the Prophets. More, you have the Evangelists and the Apostles. They testify that One has come to you from the dead, sure testimony that He is God, that you might believe in Him and have everlasting life. For in the New Testament, the Testament of forgiveness and salvation, the Word is not bound to your hand or written on your doorpost. By the indwelling of the very Spirit of God, it is written in your heart and in your mind.

The rich man fared sumptuously every day on food that perished. But for you this day, the Son of God Himself comes to be your Food. He brings you not crumbs that fall from His table, but bids you eat from His Table feeding you of His own Body and Blood. You fare sumptuously on heavenly Food as the Holy Eucharist is your Meal, the Meal of forgiveness and life, the Meal by which you have unity with God.

So you are rich, dear Christian. You are rich, O baptized of God. Yours is the inheritance of the Only-Begotten, the reward of His faithfulness. Yours, with Lazarus and Abraham and Moses and the Prophets and the Apostles and the Evangelists, is a place of never-ending joy around the throne of the Lamb who won it for you, that for eternity you might receive His Good Things, and that you be comforted.