

June 6, 2010
Trinity 1
Luke 16:19-31
“Vindication or Equalization”

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

At first glance the account of the beggar Lazarus and the rich man might seem to be a tale of vindication or equalization. All things even out in the end. The rich become poor and the poor become rich. But that is not true. It doesn't always happen that way. Nor does suffering earn favor with God. The difference between Lazarus and the rich man is not found in their wallets, nor in their deeds, but in their hearts. For while it seems as though hungry Lazarus has nothing besides the mercy of canines, in truth, he has riches the world can scarcely imagine. He has Moses and the prophets.

The rich man rejected Moses and the prophets. Even in Hell's fire, from no less of an authority than Abraham himself, the rich man refuses to believe that Moses and the prophets can save his brothers. The hard-heartedness of the goats perseveres into eternity. They want to be judged by their works. They want a god of their own design, one who looks like them. They get what they want. Thus did Our Lord calmly hand over the Pharisees and priests to their self-chosen fate with one of the saddest sentences in all of the Scriptures, “They have their reward.”

Longing for crumbs from the table, while dogs licked his wounds, miserable Lazarus found no mercy from the rich man, no crumb to abate his hunger, no balm for his wounds, no camaraderie for his ego. The kingdom of men rejected him. But in the end, Lazarus found what he sought. He found mercy that endures forever. He found Living Water and Bread from Heaven. He found satisfaction and health. He found it in Moses and the prophets. For he found there a Man in worse shape than himself, a Man who was no man but a worm, condemned for sins He did not commit, in whom there was no beauty, no comeliness, surrounded by dogs. That Man bore the iniquity of all the evil fallen men have done, so that fallen men like Lazarus and the rich man and all of who ever lived might go free.

In His mercy God lowered Lazarus to the point where he was not too proud to beg. For He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. . . As he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. He gives to His children harvest where they did not sow, win where they did not tend, grace they have not earned. The God of Abraham and Baby of Mary, the Messiah foreseen and prophesied by Moses, found Lazarus through His Word. So that Lazarus, for all his trouble in this sad life, now knows perfect joy and peace. His chastisement is heavy, but ever placed in perfect love. Soon it is taken away and the angels bear you home.

O that God in His abundant grace and wisdom would make us like that holy beggar, helpless, weak, and dependent, trusting in no one but Him, satisfied with no other food, drinking no other wine! That we would be dogs eating undeserved crumbs from His table, licking His wounds unto salvation, and basking forever in His love! For of such, dogs and children, drunks and outcasts, beggars and sinners all, is the Kingdom of God.

In + Jesus' Name. Amen.