

The First Sunday after Trinity – Pr. Faugstad sermon
St. Luke 16:19-33: “The Treasures of Heaven Are Yours.”
June 6/7, 2026 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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Lord God, heavenly Father, the treasures and riches of heaven and its glories far outweigh the most desirable riches and treasures that our earthly life affords.... Help us, that we may not despair in the day of want and trouble, nor in the day of plenty abuse Your gifts or set our hearts upon things temporal, but in true faith and love wait patiently for another life, which, when all earthly anxieties are past, You will give to all that believe in You; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. Amen. (*Luther for the Busy Man*, ed. P.D. Pahl, adapted, p. 281 & *The Lutheran Liturgy*, p. 136)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)

The sermon text for today is written in the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:

[Jesus said to the Pharisees:] “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. / “The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ / “But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’ / “And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him 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.’ / “But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ / “And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ / “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)

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, our priceless Treasure, who shares with us His eternal inheritance of holiness and life, dear fellow redeemed:

In our younger years, I don’t think any of us imagined having less than when we grew up. We imagined having a house at least as nice as the one we were living in, and we dreamed of having a lot more – plenty of money to buy what we wanted, go where we wanted, and do what we wanted. We would look out the car window at the huge houses and nice properties and wonder

what it would be like to live there. We still do that even as we get older. We think of the lucky people who have all those nice things, “living the good life.”

That’s the kind of life the rich man in today’s reading had. He wore the finest clothes. He ate the best food. He was rich and famous. Everyone knew his name. Everyone wanted to be acquainted with him and hopefully be invited to join him at his feasts. The pursuit of this kind of life is what causes so many Americans to buy lottery tickets every day. I just saw that Americans spend about \$900 billion each year on lottery tickets which is nearly \$300 million spent every day, 365 days a year.

We dream of being rich. No one dreams of being a beggar like the poor man Lazarus in today’s reading. Lazarus was laid by someone at the gate of the rich man because if anyone had money or goods to spare, it was the owner of the mansion. Lazarus was in bad shape. He was covered with sores, too weak to shoo away the dogs. Nobody wanted to go near him – they might catch what he had. They didn’t even want to look at him. He was a public nuisance. Couldn’t someone come and take him away?

We can understand that response. We might feel the same way if a sick stranger was laid outside our house. But then we remember what Jesus will say to the believers on the last day: *“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.... Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”* (Mat. 25:35-36,40). The beggar needed someone to have compassion, but no one did. Where were the faithful followers of God?

They weren’t in the rich man’s house. It isn’t that rich people cannot believe; it’s that many of them think that whatever they need, they can buy. Jesus said, *“Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God”* (Mat. 19:23-24). Can you imagine a camel with his huge humps fitting through something as tiny as the eye of a needle?

Jesus said this right after a rich man asked Him what he needed to do to have eternal life. Jesus told him he had to keep the Commandments. The rich man said he had done this. Jesus replied, *“If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”* Jesus’ words caused the man to leave in sadness, for *“he had great possessions”* (vv. 16-22). Giving away all he had for Jesus was asking too much.

But Jesus did not say he would lose all his treasure. He told him to give up his earthly treasure, so that he would have *“treasure in heaven.”* That’s a difficult bargain: give up something you can see for something you can’t see. We face decisions like this all through our life. Do I pursue whatever I feel like doing now, or do I stay mindful about my future? Do I opt for the quick fling today or wait for the commitment and stability of a life-long relationship? Indulging in the present always seems more appealing – just ask the kid with a handful of money if he would rather use it to buy toys today or put it in savings and wait for it to grow.

Focusing on the present, on earthly possessions and self-satisfaction will always be more tempting. But the best things in life are the things we wait for, like birthdays, Christmas, marriage,

children. Even better than all these are the good things God has stored up for us in heaven. Jesus says, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal”* (Mat. 6:19-20).

But what are those treasures in heaven? We find out from Lazarus. Before, he was left alone to die surrounded by dogs; now, he was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. Before, he was poor and hungry; now, he was perfectly content and satisfied. Before, he was covered with sores; now, he was covered in righteousness. Before, no one showed him mercy; now, he was comforted in heaven. Revelation 21:4 says that for all eternity, God *“will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”* Those are the treasures in heaven.

The rich man did not experience these things. He died just like Lazarus did, but he did not have faith like Lazarus had. His soul was sent to hell. Before, he had whatever his heart desired; now, he was desperate for a few drops of water. Before, he was covered in fine clothes; now, he was covered in flames. Before, he was satisfied and happy; now, he was in torment and anguish. Before, he would not admit the needy through his gates; now, God would not admit him through the gates of heaven. Before, everyone knew his name; now, nobody cared about him.

The eternal judgment of the dead cannot be changed. Those who die in faith cannot lose heaven. Those who die in unbelief can never escape hell. Abraham said to the rich man, *“between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.”* This is why now is the time to repent of our sins and to hold on tightly to the gracious gifts He gives us.

The rich man wanted Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his five brothers about the torments of hell. Abraham replied, *“They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.”* When the rich man protested, saying that this was not enough, Abraham said, *“If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.”* “Moses and the Prophets” was the shorthand way of describing all the books in the Old Testament Scriptures. Abraham said that the Holy Scriptures were powerful to bring the rich man’s brothers to repentance and faith.

The rich man disagreed like so many do today. They view the Bible as a man-made book, full of superstitions, a book which probably does more harm than good. If they think there is some better place like heaven, they expect they will get there because of how good they have been. They fought for social justice. They helped the needy. They lived a decent life. But Abraham, the father of the faithful, who *“believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness”* (Gen. 15:6) – this Abraham says, *“let them hear [Moses and the Prophets].”*

He says the same thing to you and me. *“Listen to the Word of God; read it; study it; memorize it; meditate on it. It is the living Word of the living God.”* God’s Word does not return to Him empty (Isa. 55:11). You are proof of that. You are here today because *“the Holy Ghost has called [you] by the Gospel, enlightened [you] with His gifts, sanctified and kept [you] in the true faith”* (Luther’s *Small Catechism*, Third Article).

Through His powerful Word, God made you His own child in Holy Baptism. Through His Word, He imparts the forgiveness of your sins. Through His Word, He strengthens your faith. Through His Word, He comforts you when you experience the loss of good things in this life. Through His Word, He prepares you to meet the angels with confidence and joy when they arrive to take your soul to heaven.

Through His Word, you have received many good things, eternal things, things that make you richer than Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos, or Elon Musk. One day, all the riches they worked so hard for will slip through their fingers just like sand. Money can buy neither happiness nor salvation. You were ransomed from your greed and selfishness, from sin and death, *"not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot"* (1Pe. 1:18-19).

He offered Himself up for you and every poor beggar, so that your hands are washed clean of all your sins. He also lived a completely holy life on your behalf, perfectly loving and helping His neighbors in need. He places the treasures of His forgiveness and righteousness in your hands, so that you are made an heir of all the treasures of heaven.

When you were younger, you dreamed of many good things, and God has blessed you with the earthly gifts of home, family, and friends beyond what you could have imagined. But He has much greater things in store for you than these. Jesus secured the treasures of heaven for you. You will receive them like Lazarus did, when the angels come to carry your soul to the kingdom of light. Then you won't remember the troubles of this life, and all the good and holy things of God will be yours forever.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

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