

2007 Sept 30 Luke 16'19-31 Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Joke: A young man asked a old rich man how he made his money.

The old guy said,

"Well, son, it was 1932 in the depth of the Great Depression. I was down to my last nickel.

I invested that nickel in an apple. I spent the entire day polishing the apple and, at the end of the day, I sold the apple for ten cents.

The next morning, I invested those ten cents in two apples. I spent the entire day polishing them and sold them at 5:00 pm for 20 cents. I continued this system for a month, by the end of which I'd accumulated a fortune of \$1.37.

Then my wife's father died and left us two million dollars."

There may be some people here with more money. There may be some with less money but I would venture to guess that most of us would consider ourselves middle class Americans. By the world standards we are rich but in American most of us I would guess would consider ourselves middle class. One of the advantages of being middle class is that we can enjoy jokes about both the rich and the poor. But we really like jokes about the rich. We love the rags to riches stories where the rich look dumb. We really love it when the rich get there come-up-ence. Today's parable **seems to be** one in which the greedy rich get put in their place. The rich are bad. Boo! The poor are good. Yea!! God loves the poor. God hates the rich. **But I don't believe that.** I believe that God may watch out for the poor more because they need more help but God loves everyone, **even the rich.**

So what do we have going on here? There are some **interesting intricacies** here. **Try saying that three times fast.**

INTERESTING INTRICACIES We have a poor man with a name. The rich man has no name.

The poor man's name Lazarus means **God helps**.

Lazarus is at the gate. Gates are used to let people in but can be used to decide who gets in and who gets left out. The gate separates them but the rich man could have reached Lazarus through the gate if he wanted to. Later the two will be separated with a chasm so deep and wide that one cannot reach the other.

The rich man as I told the children has enough to have a party every day. Lazarus had nothing and would be satisfied with what falls on the ground. The rich man does nothing to help. But when the tables are turned, **pardon the pun,** when he is in hades and Lazarus is in heaven he want Lazarus to help him.

In the end the man who was rich cannot be helped. The separation is too great. But before he had opportunity to help because it was possible to reach through the separation.

In this dark hour the rich man sees the light.

Once upon a time, in a land far far away, two young men, friends fresh out of college, began working for the same company. Tom, a real go-getter, was determined he was going to be an important person in the company, even if he had to step on a few toes to achieve his goal. As the years passed, he learned all the tricks for making a good impression, even when it meant stealing other people's ideas, fudging a bit on accounts, and buttering up his superiors, while making fun of them behind their backs. He kept telling his wife and kids, "You've got to learn to work the system. Don't worry about those you leave behind. Just remember you're number one. You have to take care of yourself. Don't be like Joe. Look at him. He's never going to go anywhere, always trying to encourage his workers, challenging the bosses when he doesn't agree with them. Higher ups don't want to know the truth." Joe believed it was important that he and the people who worked for him did a good job. He encouraged them. When someone had an idea for a better way of doing a task, he was open to the idea and always gave others credit. He was not averse to challenging company policy that was unfair or unethical. Though using different approaches, the two had worked their way up to equal positions in the company when the stockholders and board of directors began questioning why the company wasn't doing better. Upper management responded by downsizing. They combined Tom and Joe's divisions, made Joe a director, and, having discovered Tom's fudging of accounts, fired him. When Tom's children started their careers, he warned them of the pitfalls of his style. Unfortunately, they had absorbed his philosophy and, like him, thought they could beat the system.

In the end after Tom was fired, Tom saw the light and tried to warn his children. In the end the rich man saw the light and tried to help his brothers. Send someone to warn them.

Father Abraham told the rich man they have the Moses and the Prophets they should listen to them. That is they had things like the Ten Commandments. But the rich man knows that they will not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they won't follow the Ten Commandments, because neither did he. But if someone goes to them from the dead. No, Abraham says if they don't listen to Moses and the Prophets neither will they listen if someone rises from the dead.

Someone rising from the dead turns on a light with us. **We know someone who rose from the dead.** We are here today because of the message of the one who rose from the dead. It's true that most people didn't believe the message of the one who rose from the dead, but we did. That's why we are here. We heard the message and believed it and listened to it.

This is not about trashing the rich. It's about having compassion for those in need. For those of us who have heard the word from the one who rose from the dead, we are led by Jesus' example of love and compassion for those in need. For those who won't listen, there is always the message of the rich man and his fate. As one of my favorite professors use to say. We are motivated by the gospel of Jesus Christ; If not, the law will work just fine.

May the peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts, your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our lord.

Amen?