

9/28/25
16th Sunday after Pentecost
For Group Meetings from September 21st – September 27th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: O God, rich in mercy, you look with compassion on this troubled world. Feed us with your grace, and grant us the treasure that comes only from you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER

Share: How did last week's scripture (Luke 16:1-13) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: Luke 16:19-31

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. How are the rich man and Lazarus described at the beginning of the story?
2. What details are given about the rich man's experience in Hades?
3. What role do Moses and the prophets play in Abraham's answer?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. When have you felt invisible?
2. What habits or rhythms could help you notice those you usually pass by?
3. What false beliefs about money or success are hardest for you to let go of?

Memorize this verse:

"He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'" (Luke 16:31) Who or what has encouraged your faith this week?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 146. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

If last week's parable was difficult because it was rather confusing, this week's parable is difficult because it seems painfully clear: hoard wealth in this life and suffer the consequences in the next. Or is it? While there is absolutely no question that Luke was tremendously concerned with the proper use of wealth. After all, both his Gospel and Acts have that as a major theme. This is a parable where metaphorical, exaggerated, even hyperbolic language is the norm. So, I hesitate to draw any hard and fast conclusions from it. Further, I also hesitate to use this parable to establish the reality or character of hell because, quite interestingly, while the rich man has indeed experienced a profound reversal of fortune (another theme in Luke) he is nevertheless referred to by Abraham as "child," making it difficult to conclude that he has been utterly rejected. So, what if this parable isn't about the afterlife at all, but rather is about our lives right now? Two things in particular persuade me to lean in this direction. First, the chasm that is fixed between the rich man and Lazarus isn't new. Indeed, that chasm was fixed a long, long time ago and reinforced every time the rich man came and went into his sumptuous abode to feast at his rich table and ignored Lazarus. He obviously knew Lazarus was there and understood his plight, because he knows Lazarus by name. Yet he did nothing. Further, even in the afterlife the rich man continues to treat Lazarus as a non-entity, a servant who should fetch him some water or, failing that, be sent as a messenger to his brothers. In both his earthly life and in the life to come, the rich man refuses to see Lazarus as a person, a human, a fellow child of God, and so ignores him and his plight.

And seeing, in Luke's Gospel, is a very big deal. Because before you can have compassion for people, you have to see them, acknowledging their presence, needs, and gifts and above all their status as children of God worthy of respect and dignity. This the rich man utterly fails to do. Which leads me to conclude that the chasm between them is only a dramatization of the one that existed before. And this may be Luke's point all along, less warning us about punishment in the next life than urging us to the abundant life in this one by seeing those around us as God's beloved children deserving our care, attention, and fellowship. The climax of the parable reinforces a more "this-worldly" interpretation, as failing to summon Lazarus to bring him water, the rich man enlists Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers. Abraham's response is interesting: they already have all the counsel they need in the law and prophets. But the rich man will not relent, arguing that testimony from beyond the grave will be more convincing. And Abraham's answer to this is not just interesting but striking: "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" (16:31). All of which convinces me that the unrepentant but chastened rich man is not truly the subject of this parable at all. We are. We are those who, along with the community for whom Luke originally wrote, know the resurrected Lord. We are the ones who have the law and the prophets and have seen God's compassion embodied in the life and ministry of Jesus. We are the ones who gather each week to celebrate his victory over the grave, forgiveness of sin, and the possibility of living in light of God's grace, mercy, and abundance. We are those who follow the crucified and Risen Lord.

All of which brings me to what I think is Luke's central question: Is Abraham right? Does any of this make a difference? Does our faith in and experience of the Risen Lord help us see those we would prefer not to see and regard those around us as worthy of compassion, respect, and honor or not? Does the testimony of the One who has conquered death and called us to follow him make a difference? Just to be clear: I don't think Luke is saying that how we answer this question will determine our eternal destiny. I think he is more interested in whether it shapes our life right now. Because Luke knows that we simply cannot live into the abundant life God offers us here and now alone. Abundant life comes via community, when we see those around us as gifts of God and experience the blessing of sharing what we have with others. Ultimately, this parable isn't about earning or relinquishing an eternal reward. It's about the character and quality of our life right now. So, while it is certainly a warning not to overlook those around us in need, it is also an invitation to live into fuller, more meaningful, and more joyous life by sharing ourselves with those around us here and now.

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from
evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen