

**SERMON FOR MORNING PRAYER
THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER**

Lessons:¹

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the fourth Chapter of the Fifth Book of Moses, called Deuteronomy.²

“Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. Your eyes have seen what the LORD did because of Baalpeor [**BAY-ull-PEA-orr**]: for all the men that followed Baalpeor [**BAY-ull-PEA-orr**], the LORD thy God hath destroyed them from among you. But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God are alive every one of you this day. Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons; Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb [**HOE-rebb**], when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children. And

ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness. And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice. And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.

“And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb **[HOE-rebb]** out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven. But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day. Furthermore the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and sware that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance: But I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan: but ye shall go over, and possess that good land. Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee. For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.”

⁸ For bringing this point to my attention, I am indebted to Fr. Warren E. Shaw, Priest in Charge of St. David's Anglican Catholic Church, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁹ St. Luke 16:19 (RSV).

¹⁰ St. Luke 16:21.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Cf.* St. Matthew 15:27 and St. Mark 7:28.

¹³ *E.g.*, Leviticus 19:9.

¹⁴ St. Luke 10:34.

¹⁵ *See, e.g.*, St. Luke 12:33 & 18:22.

¹⁶ St. Matthew 25:34-45.

¹⁷ St. Matthew 25:40 (RSV).

¹⁸ St. Matthew 25:45 (RSV).

¹⁹ St. Luke 27; *see also The Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER 69 (PE-CUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

²⁰ St. Luke 16:31.

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Or,

Here beginneth the sixtieth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.³

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah [**EE-fuh**]; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD. All the flocks of Kedar [**KEY-durr**] shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth [**nih-BYE-ahth**] shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory. Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish [**TARR-shish**] first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine

tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee; The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou has been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the nineteenth Verse of the sixteenth Chapter of the Gospel According to St. Luke.⁴

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs

why the lawyer, to whom Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan, was able to take the entirety of the Old Testament moral prescriptions and to deduce from them what we Anglicans call “the Summary of the Law”: ““You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.””¹⁹

So all the guidance the rich man could have needed was laid out for him in the Jewish Scriptures, that is, in the Law and the prophets. But the teachings of that Law and of those prophets were precisely what he failed to follow.²⁰ And, as the rich man learned all too late, if one does not act upon what the Scriptures teach, then even someone’s return from the dead will not be enough to save that heedless person from hell.

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The Rev’d Canon John A. Hollister²¹
May 22, 2011.

¹ *An Alternative Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised in 1928)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, WITH THE ADDITIONS AND DEVIATIONS PROPOSED IN 1928 37 (Canterbury Press 2008); *The Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised In 1928)*, A BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxx (South Africa 1954); *A Table of Lessons (authorized by the Episcopal Synod)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxviii (CIPBC 1963).

² Deuteronomy 4:1-21 (KJV).

³ Isaiah 60:1-end (KJV).

⁴ St. Luke 16:19-end (KJV).

⁵ St. Luke 16:31 (RSV).

⁶ St. Luke 16:20.

⁷ Apparently, at some time after the Second World War, a manuscript did surface which named this man as “Neues”, *I. H. Marshall, Luke*, in D. GUTHRIE AND J. A. MOTYER, THE NEW BIBLE COMMENTARY REVISED, 3RD ED. 913 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970). That discovery, however, has not been taken into account as a basis for amending any of the commonly-used translations.

Throughout human history, it has been customary for the wealthy to take the leftovers from their meals and to distribute them, either at the doors of their houses or by special messengers, to the needy. The account of Jesus's encounter with the Syrophenician woman suggests that this custom was observed in Our Lord's day¹² and the Old Testament Scriptures instruct Jews, such as the ones to whom Our Lord was speaking, to make provision for feeding the needy.¹³ And from the parable of the Good Samaritan we know how Our Lord felt about caring for those who were in poor health.¹⁴

All together, we are left with a clear picture of a man who signally failed to live up to Jesus's standards for how we are to treat those who are less fortunate than we are.¹⁵ Now examine that fact in connection with Our Lord's reminder that our love for God will be judged by how we have shown our love for the needy.¹⁶ "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me"¹⁷ and "Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me."¹⁸

Thus we will not be surprised at the *denouement* [**day-NEW-mawh**] of the story when we learn, near the end of this parable, that when the rich man died, he did not go to heaven, where he would have been in company with the poor man who died lying in the street at his gate. Instead, he went to hell, which he found a very uncomfortable alternative.

Conclusion:

Finally, the self-absorbed rich man's reaction to his predictable fate leads us to the lesson that is the important teaching here for those who seek appropriately to live out their Christian profession. The Jewish Scriptures, which are our Old Testament, give all the guidance anyone could possibly need as to how to live an upright life that is appropriate for one who is a member of God's chosen people. That is

which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Second Lesson: "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead."⁵ In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

Homily:

Today's Second Lesson is the familiar parable of the rich man and the beggar. Sometimes, especially in Roman Catholic sources, this parable is referred to as "Dives [**DEE-**

vase] and Lazarus”. The poor man, Lazarus, is expressly named⁶ in the account in the texts of the New Testament which form the basis for the King James Version, the Revised Standard Version, and our other familiar translations. His name means “he whom God helps”, from which we are probably intended to infer that he was a pious and worthy person.

Oddly, the other character in the story is not so named.⁷ Rather, throughout the customary versions of this account he is simply referred to as “the rich man”. In fact, the ascription “Dives” [DEE-vase] that is sometimes used to identify him is simply the Latin for “a rich man”.

Now remember that in Judaism, a male child was *named* during the ceremony known as the *bris*, that is, during his circumcision on the eighth day after his birth, just as a Christian child is named at his or her baptism. And a Jewish boy’s circumcision is the occasion on which he joins the people of the Mosaic Covenant, just as a Christian’s baptism is the occasion on which he or she joins the people of the New and Everlasting Covenant. So in both these cases, the act by which a person becomes a member of the covenant people is also the act by which he or she acquires his or her name.

The association of these two events is not mere coincidence. *Name* and *know* share some common connotations; thus a thing that we *know* is a thing for which we have a distinguishing *name*. The same is true with respect to our relationship with God: it is by receiving a religiously-sanctioned name that we become *known to God*.⁸ In a real sense, the rite of religious initiation is our formal introduction to Him.

It is important that we bear this in mind as we begin to examine today’s parable. It means that, between the two principal actors in this drama, we have a protagonist who is named, that is, is suggested to be one who is *known* to God,

and an antagonist who does not receive the dignity of his own name but, instead, is merely described by the happenstance of his economic circumstances: “a rich man”. Thus, right at the beginning of the story, we are given a foretaste of how it is going to turn out.

So that is the first point I wish to call to your attention: the poor man is named, and his name is Lazarus, but the rich man is not named, and is simply “the rich guy”. The next point I wish to bring to your notice is the picture we are invited to infer as to the way that rich guy operates.

There are four facts that we are told that are significant in assessing this rich man’s behavior. One of those facts is that he took very good care of himself, for we are told that he “was clothed in purple [an exceedingly expensive textile, far costlier than silk is in our own day] and fine linen” and that he “feasted sumptuously every day”.⁹ So the rich guy was very, very well clothed and fed and, by implication, was very comfortably housed as well. So of Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of basic needs, he had not just taken care of food and shelter but had moved on to real luxury.

Another of those facts is that Lazarus lay at the rich man’s gate. Since the rich guy had to pass in and out of that gate every day, he could not possibly have been unaware of Lazarus or of his condition.

The next of those facts is that Lazarus was hungry and ill. We know he was hungry because he was dreaming of the scraps that were left over after the rich guy’s feasts¹⁰. We know he was ill because he was suffering from visible and probably painful skin lesions.¹¹

And the final fact is that because Lazarus’s hunger and pain continued until his death, it is pretty clear that the rich man did nothing to alleviate them.