

SERMON FOR MORNING PRAYER
The Twenty-Third Sunday after Trinity¹

Lessons:²

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the twentieth Verse of the first Chapter of the Proverbs.³

“Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

“Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.”

Or,

Here beginneth the second Chapter of the First Book of the Maccabees.⁴

“In those days arose Mattathias [**MATT-uh-tye-uss**] the son of John, the son of Simeon, a priest of the sons of Joarib [**DGOH-uh-riib**], from Jerusalem, and dwelt in

Modin [**MAH-dinn**]. And he had five sons, Joannan [**DGOE-ann-ann**], called Caddis [**KAH-diss**]: Simon; called Thassi [**THAH-see**]: Judas, who was called Macca-beus [**MACK-uh-bee-uss**]: Eleazar [**ell-ee-AY-zarr**], called Avaran [**av-uh-RON**]: and Jonathan, whose surname was Apphus [**AFF-fuss**]. And when he saw the blasphemies that were committed in Juda and Jerusalem, He said, Woe is me! wherefore was I born to see this misery of my people, and of the holy city, and to dwell there, when it was delivered into the hand of the enemy, and the sanctuary into the hand of strangers? Her temple is become as a man without glory. Her glorious vessels are carried away into captivity, her infants are slain in the streets, her young men with the sword of the enemy. What nation hath not had a part in her kingdom and gotten of her spoils? All her ornaments are taken away; of a free woman she is become a bondslave. And, behold, our sanctuary, even our beauty and our glory, is laid waste, and the Gentiles have profaned it. To what end therefore shall we live any longer? Then Mattathias [**MATT-uh-tye-uss**] and his sons rent their clothes, and put on sackcloth, and mourned very sore. In the mean while the king's officers, such as compelled the people to revolt, came into the city Modin [**MAH-dinn**], to make them sacrifice. And when many of Israel came unto them, Mattathias [**MATT-uh-tye-uss**] also and his sons came together. Then answered the king's officers, and said to Mattathias [**MATT-uh-tye-uss**] on this wise, Thou art a ruler, and an honourable and great man in this city, and strengthened with sons and brethren: Now therefore come thou first, and fulfil the king's commandment, like as all the heathen have done, yea, and the men of Juda also, and such as remain at Jerusalem: so shalt thou and thy house be in the number of the king's friends, and thou and thy children shall be honoured with silver and gold, and many rewards. Then Mattathias [**MATT-uh-tye-uss**] answered and spake with a loud voice, Though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him, and fall away every one from the religion of their fathers, and give consent to his commandments: Yet will I and my sons and

⁴ I *Maccabees* 2:1-28 (KJV).

⁵ St. Luke 16:1-end (KJV).

⁶ St. Luke 16:31 (RSV).

⁷ St. Luke 16:20.

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ St. Luke 16:19 (RSV).

¹¹ St. Luke 16:21.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Cf.* St. Matthew 15:27 and St. Mark 7:28.

¹⁴ *E.g.*, Leviticus 19:9.

¹⁵ St. Luke 10:34.

¹⁶ *See, e.g.*, St. Luke 12:33 & 18:22.

¹⁷ St. Matthew 25:34-45.

¹⁸ St. Matthew 25:40 (RSV).

¹⁹ St. Matthew 25:45 (RSV).

²⁰ St. Luke 27; *see also The Order for the Administration of the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion*, *THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER* 69 (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

²¹ St. Luke 16:31.

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my brethren walk in the covenant of our fathers. God forbid that we should forsake the law and the ordinances. We will not hearken to the king’s words, to go from our religion, either on the right hand, or the left. Now when he had left speaking these words, there came one of the Jews in the sight of all to sacrifice on the altar which was at Modin [**MAH-dinn**], according to the king’s commandment. Which thing when Mattathias [**MATT-uh-tye-uss**] saw, he was inflamed with zeal, and his reins trembled, neither could he forbear to shew [**SHOW**] his anger according to judgment: wherefore he ran, and slew him upon the altar. Also the king’s commissioner, who compelled men to sacrifice, he killed at that time, and the altar he pulled down. Thus dealt he zealously for the law of God like as Phinees [**FINN-ee-eze**] did unto Zambri [**ZAMM-bree**] the son of Salom [**SOLL-um**]. And Mattathias [**MATT-uh-tye-uss**] cried throughout the city with a loud voice, saying, Whosoever is zealous of the law, and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me. So he and his sons fled into the mountains, and left all that ever they had in the city.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the nineteenth Verse of the sixteenth Chapter of the Gospel According to St. Luke.⁵

“And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord’s debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest

thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write four-score. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

“No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

“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 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

sibly 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 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.””²⁰

So all the guidance the rich man could have needed was laid out for him in the Jewish Scriptures, which were conventionally referred to as “the Law and the prophets”. The Law was given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, so the parable's words “Moses and the prophets” can quite reasonably be taken to be a reference to the Holy Scriptures of the Jews.

But the teachings of that Law and of those prophets were precisely what the rich man failed to follow.²¹ 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. Hollister JD²²
June 6, 2011

¹ This sermon was originally written on the Gospel for Holy Communion on the First Sunday after Trinity, 2011.

² *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 44 (Canterbury Press 2008); *The Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised In 1928)*, A BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xl (South Africa 1954); *A Table of Lessons (authorized by the Episcopal Synod)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxix (CIPBC 1963).

³ Proverbs 1:20-end (KJV).

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, with its mention of someone's being fed with the crumbs from the table, suggests that this custom was observed in Our Lord's day¹³ and the Old Testament Scriptures instruct Jews, such as the ones to whom Our Lord was speaking, to make provision for feeding the needy.¹⁴ And from the parable of the Good Samaritan we know how Our Lord felt about caring for those who were in poor health.¹⁵

All together, we are left with a clear picture of the rich man as a person who signally failed to live up to Jesus's standards for how we are to treat those who are less fortunate than we are.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me"¹⁸ and "Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me."¹⁹

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 pos-

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 [**SETH**] 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."⁶ 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 named⁷ 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.⁸ 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 is *named* during the ceremony known as the *bris*, that is, during his circumcision on the eighth day after his birth, and a Jewish girl is *named* during an equivalent naming ceremony, just as a Christian child is named at his or her baptism. And a Jewish boy’s circumcision or a Jewish girl’s naming is the occasion on which he or she 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—and that is, by definition, a religious 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*.⁹ 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, by implication, this antagonist is *not* known to God. In this fashion, 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”.¹⁰ 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 feasts¹¹. We know he was ill because he was suffering from visible and probably painful skin lesions.¹²

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.