

**SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER**  
**The Fourth Sunday after Easter<sup>1</sup>**  
**(Year I)**

**Lessons:<sup>2</sup>**

**The First Lesson:** Here beginneth the thirtieth Verse of the thirty-fifth Chapter of the Second Book of Moses, called Exodus.<sup>3</sup>

“And Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, the LORD hath called by name Bezaleel [**BEZZ-uh-leel**] the son of Uri [**YOU-ree**], the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; And he hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; And to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, And in the cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work. And he hath put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Aholiab [**uh-HOE-lih-ab**], the son of Ahisamach [**uh-HIZZ-uh-mack**], of the tribe of Dan. Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work.

“Then wrought Bezaleel [**BEZZ-uh-leel**] and Aholiab [**uh-HOE-lih-ab**], and every wise hearted man, in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the LORD had commanded. And Moses called Bezaleel [**BEZZ-uh-leel**] and Aholiab [**uh-HOE-lih-ab**], and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it: And they received of Moses all the offering, which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it withal. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning. And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made;

“And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make. And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

**The Second Lesson:** Here beginneth the nineteenth Verse of the sixteenth Chapter of the Gospel According to St. Luke.<sup>4</sup>

“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 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

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

<sup>2</sup> *The Table of Lessons*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxix (Anglican Church of Canada 1962).

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 35:30—36:7 (KJV).

<sup>4</sup> St. Luke 16:19-end (KJV).

<sup>5</sup> St. Luke 16:31 (RSV).

<sup>6</sup> St. Luke 16:20.

<sup>7</sup> 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, 3<sup>RD</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> St. Luke 16:19 (RSV).

<sup>10</sup> St. Luke 16:21.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Cf.* St. Matthew 15:27 and St. Mark 7:28.

<sup>13</sup> *E.g.*, Leviticus 19:9.

<sup>14</sup> St. Luke 10:34.

<sup>15</sup> *See, e.g.*, St. Luke 12:33 & 18:22.

<sup>16</sup> St. Matthew 25:34-45.

<sup>17</sup> St. Matthew 25:40 (RSV).

<sup>18</sup> St. Matthew 25:45 (RSV).

<sup>19</sup> 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).

<sup>20</sup> St. Luke 16:31.

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did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me”<sup>17</sup> and “Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.”<sup>18</sup>

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 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.”<sup>19</sup>

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.<sup>20</sup> 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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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.”<sup>5</sup> 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 named<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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 Jew-

ish 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*.<sup>8</sup> 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".<sup>9</sup> 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 feasts<sup>10</sup>. We know he was ill because he was suffering from visible and probably painful skin lesions.<sup>11</sup>

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.

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 day<sup>12</sup> and the Old Testament Scriptures instruct Jews, such as the ones to whom Our Lord was speaking, to make provision for feeding the needy.<sup>13</sup> And from the parable of the Good Samaritan we know Our Lord felt about caring for those who were in poor health.<sup>14</sup>

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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> "Truly, I say to you, as you