

The First Sunday after Trinity with the Rite of Confirmation for Jim Bradley  
14 June, Anno Domini 2020  
St. Luke 16:19-31  
Pr. Kurt Ulmer

In the Name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The Word of God is sufficient. Really, what God says is everything. What God says is. It is truth that shows us the way to everlasting life. It alone has the power to save, to comfort, to heal, to give hope. Every Word that God speaks is true. There is no reason for you to doubt any of it for any reason. There will never be a scientific discovery that disproves what the Creator of the universe has spoken. No archaeological find will ever disagree with the witness of Holy Scriptures because they record true events. What God promises to do He will do all the time, every time. There is nothing else in all of creation that is that certain.

The eternal home of the rich man is a warning to us all when it comes to Holy Scripture. If you will not be satisfied with the Word of God, there can be no salvation for you because the entire Christian faith is built upon what God has spoken. If you do not believe what God has clearly told you about you and Him, you will suffer the same eternal torment as the rich man. Miracles and signs and fleeting emotions and reason and science can't help you. To doubt God's Word in Holy Scripture is to call Him a liar. To trust in your wealth and in your good works is deny what God has spoken - that you are a sinner and that your works are polluted to the core by sin. Every last man, woman, and child born of flesh and blood is completely incapable of saving him or herself and needs to be born again from above. We all need God to save us by His mercy. There are no exceptions. The rich man should have known that, just like Nicodemus should have known. After all, this rich man was likely a priest judging by the color of his garments and his sumptuous feasting. Priests were at the heart of God's gracious work to save sinners - offering sacrifices (from which they themselves would feast). The rich man should have been acutely aware of the mercy God had shown him in promising a Savior and providing the temporary sacrifices of atonement in the temple. He offered the prayers. He poured out the blood. He stood in the office of the true high priest, Jesus Christ, who offered His own Blood, once and for all as atonement for the sins of the whole world.

But the rich man refused to believe what he heard from Moses and the Prophets. He refused to believe that before God, he was just as much of a poor, miserable beggar covered in the festering sores of his pride and greed and lovelessness as poor Lazarus. That's why he was not satisfied that his unbelieving brother priests and Pharisees should have the Scriptures. "No,

Father Abraham. The Word of God isn't enough. We don't believe what God has spoken. We need more."

"Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." It is that simple. The Bible, God Himself in His own words tells you that He created the world in seven 24-hour days by speaking all things into existence from nothing. The Bible, God Himself in His own words tells you that in Christ you have forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. The Bible, God Himself in His own words promises that all who believe in the atoning Blood of Jesus and receive the washing of Holy Baptism will be saved. The Bible, God Himself in His own words tells you that under simple bread and wine His true Body and Blood are present bearing with them the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life which He won on the cross. In your hearing this day, the Holy Trinity has spoken. Not through a still small whisper or voice in your head, but through the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures, now in your own language, which have been read in your hearing. This Word is the living voice of the living God by which the Holy Spirit draws sinners to Christ. All who believe all that they have heard confess God to be true and such faith is counted to you as righteousness. The blessed apostle Paul clearly says through the Holy Spirit "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ." (Romans 10:17)

And notice, that this does not apply simply to the New Testament. Father Abraham directs the rich man and his brothers to Moses and the Prophets. What can this mean except that the entire Old Testament, like the New, is about salvation through Jesus Christ? It has been in vogue for a while to set the Old Testament aside because it seemed to paint a less-than-nice picture of God. This is nothing new. The ancient heretic Marcion did the same thing, proposing that the God of the Old Testament who seems to be so violent and unreasonable must be a different God from the God who sent Jesus. This is nothing more than our sinful flesh trying desperately to deny the horrible nature of our sin and God's righteous judgment against it. We don't like the Old Testament because we don't want to admit just how serious our sins are. We don't like to see the reality of God's hatred and punishment of sin. Ben Franklin tried the same thing - cut out what seems unreasonable from Scripture and keep the rest. In other words, make God in your image and likeness.

Children of God, believe the witness of Moses and the Prophets. Even Jesus Himself declares this to the disciples on Easter evening. Having risen from the dead Jesus said "everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." (Luke 24:44) Do not doubt the prophetic witness or think that it contradicts the testimony of Christ and the apostles. It is all one witness because it is all the witness of God concerning Himself and our salvation. The Old Testament looks forward to the promised

Christ and the New Testament rejoices in the fulfillment of that promise in Jesus. This is why the basis of all Jesus' and the apostles' preaching is the Old Testament witness and demonstrating that Jesus of Nazareth is exactly who Moses and the Prophets were speaking of. Thus we see the importance for ourselves to read and study the Old Testament Scriptures just as diligently and prayerfully as we ought to read and study the New. All of it proclaims Christ and through all of it, God has ordained that faith is created and nurtured and strengthened.

All who seek to join the fellowship of this altar, as our dear brother Jim does this day, are asked the same question "Do you believe that the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures are the inspired and inerrant Word of God?" And all who joyfully confess before God and men "I do", are themselves a testament to the power of the Word of God to rescue us from sin and unbelief and make us children and heirs of God and His kingdom. Jim, like all of us, stands and makes this good confession because he has heard prophetic and apostolic testimony to Jesus read and proclaimed and by the grace of God has believed all that he has heard. This Spirit-wrought faith is counted to Jim by God as righteousness, just as it was to Abraham and to Lazarus. And all who confess this faith will join Lazarus at Father Abraham's side receiving the good things of life and salvation.

Children of God, do not doubt God's Word. When God promises you His love and His forgiveness, do not let anything convince you otherwise - no matter how hard things are, no matter how far away God may seem, no matter if every facet of your life on this earth seems to be an unending battle, no matter how dark your sin or burdened your conscience. When God promises forgiveness, when He promises you His love and care and protection, you have it. Nothing in heaven or on earth, not even God Himself, can change that promise. Believe what God speaks in the Bible. Where there is doubt, pray that the Lord would forgive you and strengthen your faith because He forgives that too and His good and gracious will is that you be saved and that you take comfort in all that He has told you in His Word.

In the Name of +Jesus.