



The Life That Really Is Life
Fourth in the Fall sermon series "Taking Jesus Seriously"
I Timothy 6:6-19; Luke 16:19-31
Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost ~ Sunday, September 29th, 2019
First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois
The Rev. Dr. Forrest Krummel, Jr.

Text: ...thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life. (I Timothy v. 19)

"Take hold of the life that really is life" stopped me cold. It is a rather curious phrase, don't you think? What does it mean? What does "the life that really is life" look like? I found insight in today's gospel parable.

The story of the Rich Man and Lazarus is often considered to be a parable about the wise use of wealth and punishment in the afterlife. But what if it is really about living a life that is really life, the thing that I Timothy is talking about?

This past week two articles, one in *The Christian Century* and the other in a blog post, reminded me that there is very little mention of either "the afterlife" in the bible or Hell. Nor here is no mention of Hades or Hell or the life to come in any of Paul's letters.

Now when two different articles appear serendipitously while I am working on a sermon, I pay close attention because I believe that this is a "God-moment", the Almighty is trying to tell me something.

The bible is more interested in the "here and now" than it is the "here after". This is important as we examine our text and the parable.

David Lose in his exploration of Jesus' parable reminded me that by their very nature parables are hyperbole not allegory. They are metaphorical, not literal.

The chasm that separated the rich man and Lazarus was "fixed a long, long time ago," created by the rich man's life decisions.

For the longest time I thought that he simply didn't "see" Lazarus and even preached from that perspective. But he did see Lazarus. He knew Lazarus' name. Lazarus was not a stranger. He was the guy that lay at the gate and had to be stepped over time and time again.

Is Lazarus like the people that I see holding up signs at shopping centers in our own city? I have no doubt, some of them are hustlers, especially those who seem to have "office hours". But that is not true of other. It is not true of those who sleep at the Salvation Army or who call the Dream Center their home or who seek shelter at the Rescue Mission. And there are others who addicted and mentally ill wandering the streets of our city during the day and sleeping in doorways or along the river at night. They are afraid of the shelters either because their illness increases their paranoia or because they had things stolen while they slept at a shelter.

The rich man helped society dig the chasm of separation each time he refused to recognize the humanity of Lazarus, each time he failed to recognize Lazarus as one of God's children, created in the divine image just as the rich man way. The rich man wasn't bad, he was just complacent.

When the rich man asked Father Abraham to allow Lazarus to be the bridge over the chasm, if not for himself, at least for his brothers Abraham reminded him that they have Moses and the prophets to bridge the separating gap. But what if they won't listen to Moses and the prophets, surely if someone were to return from the dead, they would listen.

Or would they?

And here is where the parable, Luke's account turns to us. Don't we who say that we take Jesus seriously have someone who returned from the dead and remind us of God's call echoed in Moses and the prophets? Are we listening?

The apostle Paul said that we, the church, are the body of Christ in this world today. If are the body of Christ than why are there judgmental glances and hushed whispers?

Why aren't Christ's arms reaching, His hands healing, His words teaching? Why is His love not showing?

The parable isn't really about the rich man and Lazarus. It is about us.