

**St Paul's Lutheran Church (Latimer, IA)**  
**Trinity 1 – June 2, 2024**  
**Luke 16:19-31 – The Rich Man and Lazarus**  
**Rev Peter Wagner**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus only mentioned one man's name: Lazarus, the man of faith. The rich man in the story certainly had a name of his own. But his name is forgotten. Only the beggar is remembered, only he is comforted.

Names matter. To have your name mentioned and remembered by God is to live forever. And when you were baptized, you received the Triune name of God. Therefore you possess a new name that God will certainly remember, a new identity, and new life.

Names matter, as demonstrated by the example of Abram in Genesis. Not long after our reading from Genesis 15, God changed his name from Abram to Abraham. The change was to reflect the blessings that he received by faith, offspring as numerous as the stars.

By faith. That's the key. "Abram believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Not by works, by anything he did, but simply by believing the promise of God.

Blessed is Abraham, and blessed is Lazarus, and blessed are all who receive God's name, and his promises by faith. Your lawless deeds are forgiven, your iniquity is covered by the blood of Jesus. Against you the Lord counts no sin.

And notice how faith, naming, and the promises of God all go together with baptism. Abraham believed God, it was counted to him as righteousness, and he was circumcised as a seal of that promise. The new name, the faith, the promise, the inheritance, and circumcision, they all came together. Just like in baptism, which is the New Testament fulfillment of Old Testament rite of circumcision. In baptism, a new name, faith, the promised Holy Spirit, the inheritance of righteousness, and the water, they all go together.

Clearly, names and naming have to do with baptism. That Lazarus was remembered but the rich man forgotten, this teaches about the blessings of baptism.

This morning, a little girl, too weak to carry herself, was carried to the baptismal font of God. She came before him with humble faith, like a beggar. Here she was asked, "How are you named?" And since she was too young to answer for herself, her parents answered on her behalf: Clara Amy. They spoke for her not because she had no name, but because she was unable to say it. And they answered the baptismal questions on her behalf for the same reason. Not because she had no faith, but because she was unable to say it.

For her childlike faith little Clara was taken and baptized and given a new name, a perfect name, the name the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Now, baptized into the Triune name, she is a Christian.

Like Lazarus, like Abraham, she now has an eternal name by faith, a name which will never be forgotten. She bears the name of God. Therefore, just as Lazarus exchanged his rags for the riches of heaven, she has exchanged her sin for God's righteousness. Jesus has taken his perfect righteousness and clothed her with it. He's taken her rags and borne them to the cross.

The same thing is true for you. All who are baptized have the riches of Christ. Unlike the nameless rich man, you shall not perish forgotten forever. Jesus has exchanged his riches for your filth. Now you are rich, far richer than the rich man in the parable. You lie at no one's gate hoping for crumbs. You are privileged to enter this sanctuary each week to eat Christ's own body and blood. You fare sumptuously on the rich daily bread of the word of God.

Christ is the fabulously rich man who became poor for you, to make you rich. For your sake he became poor, so you might be rich in him. You were harried by dogs, suffering awful sores of the consequences of sin reigning in you. But in him, you who were poor have been raised up to become children of God. Now you abide in his love. Now you have boldness in the day of judgment.

Yet in this baptismal Christian life, even though you possess all the riches of God, even though you are washed and renamed, you remain poor. Like Lazarus, you suffer. In the image of Christ you bear your cross. Not only do you suffer the attacks of the devil and the world, but you remain a sinner. Your faith is weak. You lie helplessly before God. So confess it. Become weak in the humility of repentance. On your own you cannot even chase off the dogs that come to lick your sores. You live not by your own strength but by the mercy of God in

Christ Jesus.

And take warning. Like so many who call themselves Christians, the rich man thought he belonged to God's people. He called Abraham his father by circumcision. Yet he took God's blessings and means of grace for granted. He presumed on his birthright, without faith. So while Lazarus was carried to Abraham's bosom, the rich man suffered torment and anguish in hell.

His unbelief condemned him. He did not believe God's word, not Moses or the prophets. If he had believed, he would have heeded the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 15, "If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother." If he had heard God's word, he would have heeded the words of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2, "The Lord kills and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and brings up. The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and lifts up. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap."

If this rich man truly believed the love of God, he would have loved his brother Lazarus. But instead, he refused to help. His actions revealed that his faith was a lie. As 1 John 4 says, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother."

Yet even while burning in hell, the rich man still did not believe. He asked Lazarus to go and warn his brothers, because he didn't think the word of God was good enough. He objected when Abraham said, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." "No, father Abraham," he said, "But if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." For he thought people need more than the Bible to believe. But Abraham answered, "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead."

And truly, the Scriptures do proclaim a man who has risen from the dead. Moses and all the prophets bear him witness. In him alone God's great reversal is accomplished.

Believe in the Scriptures, and in the risen Son they proclaim. That is saving faith. Do not take God's riches for granted. Lay hold of the blood of Jesus as your only hope, just as Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.

And as God has shown you love and mercy to you in Christ, show love and mercy to others. True faith is busy and active, filled with love for others in response to the love we've received. Let your faith overflow in love and good works for your neighbor, especially for your baptized brothers and sisters in Christ. Jesus now sits at your gate in the body of every brother or sister in need. To turn from them is to turn from Jesus himself. To ignore, despise, or pass them by is to ignore, despise, pass by, and deny Christ himself. Truly, if we loved one another as he first loved us, there would never be a poor or needy person in the church.

All this is convicting. But what a comfort that God will not forget the children he has named. He remembers those in need, and he remembers you and prepares good works for you, opportunities to live out your faith. And for that faith he counts undeserved righteousness. And for that righteousness he gives a new name, and all the blessings of heaven.

So you who are baptized into the name of Christ, who enjoy all his promises, come lay hold of those promises. You who cannot feed yourselves, come and be fed by him. You who are poor in this world, scorned by all, come receive the comfort of Jesus in his word and sacrament. Approach the table as his blessed guest of honor. The sacraments assure you of the promised eternal comfort of Jesus, when at last the angels come, to Abram's bosom bear you home.

To you there is no fear of hell, only confidence before God's throne. So take hold of paradise with Abraham and Lazarus and all the saints. Let your Savior comfort you and wipe every tear from your eyes. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, unto life everlasting. Amen.