

19 "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day.

20 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores

21 and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried.

23 In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.

24 So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

25 "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.

26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

27 "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house,

28 for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

29 "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'

30 " 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'

31 "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'

Good Morning, My Sisters and Brothers in Christ. I greet you this morning filled with the joy that comes from serving God. If you share my joy this morning I ask you to praise God. For this joy that we have, the world did not give it to us and the world cannot take it away.

I want to move directly into the passage for consideration this morning because I want to give you time to think about the words and how you **ought** to respond and how you are **going** to respond. For the past three Sundays I have been working with an overall theme of how to live like we have a Savior. On second Sunday I reminded us that we needed:

THREE TYPES OF LOVE
RADICAL LOVE
TOUGH LOVE
POWERFUL LOVE

Radical Love – loving your enemies and unlovable people

Tough Love - praying for those who misuse you

Powerful Love – denying yourself in order to help others

On last Sunday I suggested that disciples of Jesus ought to be:

M. A. D. FOR JESUS
Making a Difference for Jesus

I closed that sermon with the words of Dr. King.

The end of life is not to be happy, nor to achieve pleasure and avoid pain,
but to do the will of God, come what may.”

— Martin Luther King Jr.

“Use me, God. Show me how to take who I am, who I want to be, and
what I can do, and use it for a purpose greater than myself.”

— Martin Luther King Jr.

Words of a common man who decided to get M.A.D. for Jesus.

And today as we consider the story of the unnamed Rich Man and the poor beggar Lazarus I want to point out that if we are to live like we have a Saviour we must do the things our **Saviour told us to do** – which are **also the things He did**.

Would you consider with me this theme?

STOP! DID YOU LOOK BOTH WAYS?

SHALL WE PRAY! Father God, sometimes when we have a biblical story in front of us that is familiar we want to rush through it for we know it already. But today I ask that you slow us down and allow us to hear an old story with new ears and a clean heart. Give us the lesson contained within this parable of Jesus that will help us in the 21st century. Do what only you can do – make the deaf hear, the hard hearted have compassion, and the one who is going astray lead them back to you. Father, I ask that you give me the words your people need to hear. Use me for your service, in the name of, Jesus the Christ. AMEN and AMEN.

STOP! DID YOU LOOK BOTH WAYS?

When we get to an intersection walking, biking or driving we have been taught to STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN before we proceed across the street. Fire safety teaches STOP, DROP AND ROLL. STOP, LOG OUT, TAG OUT are instructions for machine safety. In all walks of life that are instructions that begin with "stop". In other words if we are going to proceed to the next thing, help ourselves or others we have to **stop** the direction we are going so we can move in another direction.

That is one of the problems with seeking wealth and material possessions. **We don't know when to stop.** We want a car, a hoopty is okay for our first car, but soon we want a sunroof and fancy rims and oversized wheels and then we want a car that has not been previously owned, gently driven or has low mileage. We want what Curtis Mayfield sang about:

gangsa whitewalls, TV antenna in the back,
sunroof top, diamond in the back

But it does not stop there we want 9 bedrooms, 15 full baths and 4 ½ baths - Michael Jordan's house listed at \$29 million. We want to go to the Super Bowl – there are still a few tickets left in the \$1300.00 range. We want a weekend in New York. We want to see and be seen.

When I try to imagine the Rich man in our story I see a man who has it all. Fine clothes, a new car, tickets to sporting events, a house in

an exclusive neighborhood and yet everyday he goes in and out of his house and he never STOPS.

Now someone is thinking that's not possible pastor, he has to stop sometime. Perhaps! But how often do you walk pass the beggar who works the same corner week after week, month after month and year after year? Don't you reach a point where you don't see the unnamed beggar, who does not speak, perhaps just looks to see what you threw away? You might even think one of those classical quotes:

do better if he tried, go the shelters,
what are you doing in my neighborhood?

When your purpose in life is to have, to seek, to be wealthy it is easy to lose sight of what it means to life like you have a Saviour. When your purpose in life is to catch up with the Jones and surpass them it becomes easy to turn your head and go another way when you see the beggar outside your gate.

The Rich man in our parable had only one sin – he lived in luxury while someone lay at his gate in rags. If we wanted to, we could call his sin a sin of omission – failed to do something when he could have and should have.

What I find interesting about this parable is that the Rich man was buried and the beggar was carried to Abraham's side. That should have been the end of the story, but if you look carefully you see that the Rich man still had not learned anything. He was in the fires of hell and he still thought of Lazarus as being his servant and not even worth speaking to directly. The Rich man does not ask Lazarus to come and bring him a drop of water:

*So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and
send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue,
because I am in agony in this fire.'*

and when that request was denied he asked that Lazarus be raised from the dead and sent to save his five brothers. And Abraham replies

"He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'

There are those that will argue that this is just a parable and it only applies to the 1st century, there are no beggars outside our gates. But I think you are wrong – South Suburban PADS – PUBLIC ACTION TO DELIVER SHELTER operates 2-3 shelters 7 nights a week from October to April. ¹ Chicago Public Schools have shown an increase in homeless children each year since 2008 and last year was a 10% increase. ² There are 34 food pantries in Matteson. (I could go down a bunny trail and ask why I could not locate any of these negative stats for Park Forest. Is it – could it be because Park Forest is like the Rich man and not looking outside its gates?)

There are beggars right outside our gates. And we cannot afford to act like the Rich Man. We must stop and look both ways. Why? Because that is what **Jesus taught** and that is what **Jesus did**.

Before the resurrection Jesus taught the parable of the sheep and the goats:

The Sheep and the Goats

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

¹ http://www.sspads.org/ST_Sites.html

² <http://www.chicagohomeless.org/faq-studies/>

⁴⁰ "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

⁴⁴ "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

⁴⁵ "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

⁴⁶ "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."³

After the resurrection Jesus taught the same lesson again

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

¹⁶ Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."⁴

Not only was Jesus teaching but Jesus was doing.

healing the sick, helping the lame to walk, giving sight to the blind

And Jesus is still calling

Jesus is still calling us to STOP! AND LOOK BOTH WAYS

³ <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+25&version=NIV>

⁴ <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+21&version=NIV>

God Has No Hands

God Has No Hands

By Annie Johnson Flint

God has no hands but our hands to do his work today;

God has no feet but our feet to lead others in his way;

God has no voice but our voice to tell others how he died;

And, God has no help but our help to lead them to his side.

This poem has also been attributed to St. Teresa of Avila from the 14th century, but her version (below) reads quite differently, so one would assume that the poem above is an adaptation.

Christ Has No Body

By St. Teresa of Avila

Christ has no body now on earth but yours,

No hands but yours,

No feet but yours,

Yours are the eyes through which is to look out Christ's compassion to the world;

Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good;

Yours are the hands with which he is to bless men now.⁵

⁵ <http://www.anotherpartofme.com/god-has-no-hands/>