



# ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

11856 MAYS CHAPEL RD., TIMONIUM, MD 21093

Sunday May 29th, 2016 – Trinity I

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son  
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen.**

Tomorrow is Memorial Day. It is not a liturgical day in the sense that the saints and martyrs are commemorated but it is given a collect and recognition in the Church year. As we look at today's Gospel reading, I would ask you to occasionally place the lesson in context of tomorrow. We will come back to Memorial Day in a few moments.

Our current season of Trinity is not one marked with major events (like Easter, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Christmas, etc.) – instead, this is a time that some have considered to be the “teaching” part of the Church year. To “kick off” this season, we will look at something which is often misunderstood - “After placing our faith in Jesus Christ, what is a Christian supposed to do?”

Today's Gospel reading centers around a certain Rich Man that we may assume, because of his wealth, was well regarded and ranked high in society. He was “clothed in purple and fine linen.” Purple dyes were very very expensive. So much so that purple was often regarded as a regal color. The Rich Man's choice of fine clothing was both a statement of his ability to afford such luxuries and a statement to all around him that he was a person of power. The Rich Man also ate very well and (presumably) shared all these good things with all his dinner guests. Don't we appreciate going to

someone's home who has laid out the very best foods for us – usually heaping great praise upon our hosts for their generosity and thoughtfulness.

And then, “there was a certain beggar – Lazarus. Who was laid at his gate. Full of sores, running ulcers and desiring to be fed with the crumbs of the Rich Man's table.” Lazarus was certainly no thing of beauty. That he had to be laid at the Rich Man's gate speaks of crippling infirmity, sores and ulcers suggests he was ill and the fact that he was living alone on the Rich Man's stoop meant he had no place to live or funds to pay for anything. Lazarus was crippled, sick and poor. The only attention he seemed to have garnered was when dogs would lick his wounds.

Pretty Sad.

“The Beggar died and was carried by angels into Abraham's Bosom.” Freed now from physical suffering, the Beggar was lifted by Angels, certainly *better servants than the Rich Man ever had* and taken to an honored place in Paradise.

Hell was where the Rich Man went when he died which was certainly not what he had expected. “He seeth Abraham afar off – and Lazarus in his bosom – and cried out,

“Father Abraham, have mercy upon me.”

The Rich Man still did not get it. When he could not buy his way out of his situation the Rich Man was looking for another Man to get him out of his predicament where he should have been crying out to God, the Father of all Mercies.

Then, "...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. But beside all this, there is a great gulf fixed.’”

Now, we come to the central point of this parable, why was the Rich Man in Hell? How was it that he had placed himself so far away from God?

From what we do know, the Rich Man wasn't overtly evil. The Rich Man did not abuse anyone, steal from anyone, call God names or give evidence of any notorious sins upon his fellows. Given his wealth and, presumably, high station in Jerusalem, we may assume he was a Pharisee, and given his resources, able to keep most, if not almost all the Law. Along with being wealthy the Rich Man was also probably admired for being holy.

What the Rich Man did was set his sights on wealth, power and the high regard of this world – not the next. He had chosen to focus on his rewards of this world and that \*is\* what he got. The Rich Man took the rewards of Earth - and - gave no thought to those unfortunates he quite literally had to step over to get into his house each day.

The Rich Man did not make Lazarus poor (as far as we know), or ill, or an outcast. The Rich Man, if he thought about it at all, probably assumed he was doing OK by giving Lazarus the scraps off the table and maybe even his old clothing and old goods. But he didn't really pay all that much attention to Lazarus. It was almost like Lazarus was a potted plant. The Rich Man may have thought he was following our Lord's first Great Commandment – to love

God, but he certainly was not following the second of the Great Commandments – to love thy neighbor as thyself.

This parable reinforces our duty as a Christian to love others as much as we love ourselves. Giving someone in need the crumbs of your life isn't going to be enough. Would you give yourself crumbs? No, you would take a good portion. If that is true, then give others a good portion as well.

In society as a whole, we should look out for others – make sure they have enough, are treated fairly and protected from those who would abuse them. This sense of social responsibility is the hallmark of a Christian nation. Our nation was founded on those principles and was that which spurred people to make great sacrifices for both you and I.

Memorial Day: As we take time off tomorrow to spend time with family, friends, neighbors at parades, cook outs and enjoying a good time – please don't forget the reason for the holiday.

Countless men and women laid down their lives (and still do) so we might continue to live with the freedoms we all enjoy. They certainly did not give us "crumbs off the table." They gave us the very best they had to offer - their dreams, their futures, lives and their ideals.

In John 15 Jesus said, “This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this -

that a man lay down his life for his friends.

***To The Only Wise God, Our Savior, be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, Both Now and Forever. Amen.***