



5th Sunday of Luke

Of the two men in today's reading, only one is named. It's the poor man who has been given the name Lazarus. This name means, "the one whom God helps." The other man is simply defined by his possessions: the rich man. Every day, the rich man stepped over the Lazarus who lay in the streets dying of hunger and illness. When they both finally die, it's Lazarus who is comforted in the "bosom of Abraham," not the rich man. When the rich man confronts Abraham about his situation, Abraham reminds him: he had the good things in life. He's also reminded that he had the Law and the Prophets to help him. But, he didn't listen, and now, to his despair, it's too late. Today, we have the opportunity to hear and act upon the Word of God that the rich man ignored.

Scripture: Luke 16:19-31

Bottom Line: To be truly rich is to make those around us rich.

Discussion Questions

1. As we see below, there are many ways of being rich. As Orthodox Christians, we're rich with the gospel. What are other ways we are rich? What's stopping you from sharing your wealth with others? How can we get better at sharing?
2. How do you think Lazarus felt when the rich man passed him by every day? How do the "poor" in your community feel? How do you feel when you stop and help someone in need?
3. The rich man didn't listen to "Moses and the Prophets." What do you think he means. How can you do better at listening to them? What daily practices or disciplines might this require?

Moving Forward

There are two misconceptions about today's gospel reading. The first is that this is a parable about the afterlife. It takes place there, but the message isn't about what happens to us when we die. The ultimate message is about how we are to respond to the poor around us here in this life. The second misconception is that we assume "poor" and "rich" are monetary terms. While that's a part of it, it also means wealthy or poor in terms of knowledge. So, what knowledge did the rich man have? Well, if we look at the last verse, we see that he rich with the knowledge of God—he had scripture! His sin was twofold: not only did he not share his "wealth," he didn't heed the command (and warning) to do so. The lesson for us is that we should heed scripture, which tells us that we should share the "wealth" we do have—whether it's money, knowledge, or the gospel—with those who aren't as privileged.

Changing Your Mind

"But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should arise from the dead.'" (Luke 16:31)