

Grace, peace and mercy be unto you from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Our text for today is a parable of Jesus. In one sense, this story is an illustration of the explanations of the fifth and seventh commandments found in our Lutheran Catechism. What is the Fifth Commandment? "You shall not murder". The explanation in the catechism states:

" We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need."

Many people understand the first part of this explanation: " We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body." But there's more: " but help and support him in every physical need."

In our text we find a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. The rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, fared sumptuously every day. On the other hand, Lazarus was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

The rich man had no mercy for Lazarus. He did not take a sword to kill Lazarus, but did not help him or make him prosper in all the necessities of life. Therefore, the rich man did not obey the Fifth Commandment.

Neither did he obey the Seventh Commandment, "You shall not steal." The explanation of the Seventh Commandment reads:

"We should fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor's money or possessions, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his possessions and income. "

The rich man did not threaten Lazarus with a sword to take his money, or cheat him, but did not help him to improve and maintain his property and livelihood. He does not obey the fifth and seventh commandments, then, but had an even bigger problem. In confirmation, we talk about the two tables of the Law, the holy will of God for our lives. The first three commandments, the first table, deal with our relationship with God. On the other hand, the other seven commandments deal with our relationship with our fellow man. The fifth and seventh commandments belong to the second table.

However, the first commandment reads:

"You shall have no other gods. What does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things."

In addition, the summary of the first table is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength. The rich man did not love God above all things and did not trust Him for all his needs.

The rich man did not think of his wealth as a blessing from God, which could be shared with poor Lazarus. Like many people today, he thought of his wealth as something he deserved. I worked hard and all the good things that I have are mine.

We must understand that it is not a sin to be rich, to have material blessings. This parable speaks of Abraham in heaven and Abraham was a wealthy man. In this world will always be people who have more than us, and those who have less than us. What is important is not the quantity of our material goods, but our attitude towards them.

The Bible teaches the right of private property, for it says "Do not steal." Everyone has the right to have their own property under the

protection of civil law. But in our hearts, we must not think of wealth as something we deserve, and others do not deserve, but all good things we have by the grace of God.

No one deserves anything good from God, but God in His love has given us everything we have in this life. We should think of how we can help our neighbors with the goods that God has given us. We should not trust in the riches of this world as God. Our God is not wealth. Our God is our Father in heaven, who provides all our needs.

However, the rich man trusted in his wealth. And the rich man died and was buried. And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Because Lazarus died in the same time and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.

Well, the point of this parable is not that Lazarus was a good man and the rich man a bad one, but Lazarus was saved by faith in God. Lazarus had no material goods, but had faith in God. The rich man had great wealth, but did not trust God.

We confess that we are saved by faith alone, only by the grace of God, not by our own works. Christ won for us eternal life on the cross, salvation is a gift from God. However, there are consequences if we reject the gift and trust the things of this world. We stay in this world only for a while, but after this life is eternity. Where do we want to be for eternity? With God or the place of eternal fire?

The parable does not speak of the good works of Lazarus. Nothing more than that Lazarus was a humble man in the eyes of the world and had a hard life, but he had faith in God and because of his faith the angels bore him to heaven, and he was compensated for his hard life by eternal joy. The rich man refused the grace of God and was lost. Even in

hell, the rich man thought Lazarus as his servant or his inferior. But, in eternity everyone will have their just reward. The riches of this world do not last forever. In this world there are always winners and losers. A person can be a winner or loser in different stages of the same life, because here everything changes. But God's promises never change and last throughout our earthly lives to eternity where we are all winners because of Christ and His sacrifice on the cross.

This parable ends with “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.” That means we have everything we need to know for our salvation in the Holy Scriptures, the written Word of God.

In this parable we have a preview of the resurrection of Christ. He now has risen, and we have the testimony of the apostles. However, not everyone believes in Christ. For them, the words of the prophets would not be enough, neither the testimony of a man risen from the dead. For those who are focused on their own desires, their own lives, there is never enough evidence of the truth of God.

We have faith, then, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Faith is a gift from God, a miracle of God. We are also sinners, we are sinful and selfish. By our nature we have no interest in anyone outside the circle of family and friends who are interested in us.

By the power of the Holy Spirit the love of God touches our hearts to ignite love for all our neighbors. This is the power of God in this world, and therefore, as the church, we have the power to care for everyone in our communities. We should not be afraid to do so because, as our epistle (1 John 4: 16-21) says, perfect love casts out fear, and love of God is perfect.

So, by grace, we have in our hearts the love of God and the peace that passes all understanding. Amen.