

16th Sunday after Pentecost: Jer 32:1-3a, 6-15; Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16; 1 Timothy 6:6-19; Luke 16:19-31

There are many times that Jesus endorses the Old Testament either by quoting it, wielding it as a sword against evil, or explaining how scripture points to him such as when he told the synagogue attendees that the scripture from Isaiah was fulfilled in their hearing (Lk 4:21). And in our Gospel today, we see Jesus endorsing scripture again. And it is important that Jesus Christ endorses scripture. For three reasons. One, because the scriptures contain the knowledge for salvation. They teach of eternal life with God as opposed to the torment Jesus reveals today in his parable. And two, they train us up into Godliness. Which is important not only because we are rewarded for what we do through the inner workings of God's Holy Spirit but also, three, we will bear much fruit. We won't ignore the Lazarus's in our world leaving them with only dogs to lick their wounds if we be trained up to bear fruit. And if scripture were not the very word of God, then we could not rely on scripture to correctly teach us these three things. There are no other writings verbally endorsed by God other than the Old and New Testament. That the New Testament is endorsed by God is clear through many scriptures, but in particular, Jesus says to his Disciples in the upper room: "when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth," (John 16:19). And again, in John chapter 14, Jesus says to his disciples: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." The Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to remember all that Christ had taught them and when they preached and taught it was written down either by they themselves or firsthand witnesses accompanying their ministries of which Paul is included given Paul was caught up into the 3rd Heaven and shown the Gospel of truth by Jesus Christ, and Paul's teachings were also vetted by the Apostles. This is how we come by our Holy Scriptures. They are from God. This is why we refer to the Bible as the *Holy Bible*. It is Holy because it is the word of God. And the word of God, we are told is "living and active." This is because God's Holy Spirit inspired it, and God's Spirit works through scripture to make us Holy. The living God speaks to us through Holy Scriptures and actively works upon our hearts. That the Old Testament is also to be relied upon, Jesus confirmed in Luke 24:44 when he appears to all the disciples and says,

“Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.” “Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,” we are told. Our interaction with scripture is a catalyst for God to open our minds which means grace is given when we approach scripture with faith asking God to teach us, (James 1:5). And of the Old Testament Jesus says, “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.” This is how closely God has guarded God’s word. I mean think about this. Jesus says it would be easier for heaven and earth to pass away than one stroke of the pen to drop out of the Law. The same God who created the heavens and earth ensuring the universe, created and guards the Old Testament. And also in Luke chapter 24 verse 7 we are told that during his post resurrection ministry, Jesus meets two of the disciples on the road to Emmaus and the disciples say to him, because they do not recognize him at first, that they had hoped Jesus to be the one who would redeem Israel, and Jesus responds saying it was necessary for him to suffer and “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets , He explained to them what was written in all the scriptures about Himself.” The point being, the Jews knew that there was a Messiah that was coming to save them, and Jesus’ disciples were hoping Jesus to be the One. The reason the Jews knew Messiah was coming is because the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms predicted the Savior. That they knew Messiah would be divine is in many places, to include David calling Jesus: “Lord,” in Psalm 110 verse 1 saying, “The Lord said to my Lord.” Jesus explains this to us. The Jews knew the Divine Messiah was coming to save them or *should have known*.

Today, in our Gospel, we see Jesus speaking to people who *should have known* Jesus to be their Savior. Specifically, the Pharisees, the Jewish religious leaders, who hear Jesus teaching yet instead of accepting his words, they deride him. They deride him right after the parable that we talked about last week, where Jesus explains that you cannot serve both God and money. The Pharisees valued money in the way that Paul warns Timothy today saying: “those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith.” The Pharisees in loving the things of the world had wandered away from faith, and they deride Jesus. And in response to their

derision, Jesus tells them today's parable about the rich man and Lazarus. And on a forthright level, the parable confirms what Jesus has just said, in that the rich man does not live serving God, but rather money, which is evident by the fact that he overlooks the poor hungry leprous man lying at his own gate. The rich man is so busy with the things of the world, he is a dried-up tree. Jesus tells us we will know a tree by its fruit. And ignoring suffering does not happen to someone who has the words of God and through the grace of God's Holy Spirit applies God's words to their heart. But the deeper irony in the parable is the exchange between Abraham and the rich man, because the rich man wants Lazarus to go warn his five brothers so that they will not come to the place of torment that he has found himself in. In other words, the rich man wants for his brothers to be saved, and Abraham responds: "They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them." And so, we see within this very parable that Jesus is affirming that in listening to Moses and the prophets, these scriptures are able to save people. The Hebrew scriptures should have readied the five brothers to receive eternal life. But the rich man says, "No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." To which Abraham responds, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."

This is Jesus affirming in a parable, that as a result of the Pharisees failing to truly hear and understand and apply the teachings of the Old Testament, they are not ready to understand the new covenant, even if they see someone rise from the dead. This is why we are told in scripture that the "Holy Scriptures...are able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." They give knowledge to save us, and grow us up into Godliness, and to bear lasting fruit. It is a threefold grace. But the rich man knows that his five brothers do not believe the written word. But if a live person dies and comes back, then they might believe, for this would be a convincing proof that eternal life even exists. For if eternal life does not exist, then eat drink, for tomorrow we die (Is 22:13 & 1 Cor 15:32). Meaning it matters not how we live if life be not eternal. Not in the big scheme of things. So send somebody to prove eternal life to my brothers, the rich man says. But Abraham responds with: "If they do not believe Moses and the prophets they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead." And true to Jesus' parable, the Pharisees in fact

end up seeing *two people* rise from the dead. Jesus himself but also Lazarus. And I believe that Jesus put the name Lazarus into this parable because he knew he was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, and as predicted, the Pharisees are not convinced of the one who can save them from torment, because right after Christ performs the miracle of raising Lazarus, they double down their efforts to kill Jesus because they are afraid that everyone, and I quote: “will believe in Him,” (John 11:48). And in John Chapter 5, Jesus says to the unbelieving Jews: “You pour over the Scriptures because you presume that by them you possess eternal life. These are the very words that testify about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life...If you had believed Moses, you would believe Me, because he wrote about Me.” Jesus says right there that the scriptures, in pouring over them, the scriptures teach people how to possess eternal life through Christ Jesus. Believing in the one whom God has sent saves us, (Jn 6:29).

God gave us the Old Testament to prepare hearts for Jesus, and if we believe what is written in the Old Testament, it opens our minds to believe everything about Jesus. That he is the one prophesied about who came to save us, and that he is coming again as King and that his Kingdom will have no end. And that through him we have eternal life. Just as Jesus says to the Samaritan woman, “whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become a fount of water springing up to eternal life,” (Jn 4:13 & 14). I repeat, Jesus says: “Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst.”

Sadly, we see today that the rich man, in the next life, thirsts. And the rich man is so tormented by this thirst that he begs of Abraham that Lazarus will dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue. And to be honest, I don't know that our spirits *can physically* thirst. Spirits are not like flesh with stomachs and such...but what this parable reveals is that when we die, we are not unconsciously waiting for the resurrection of our bodies. Our spirits go to heaven or Hades. Abraham's bosom is another word for heaven. And Hades is not heaven but rather a separate realm of the dead. We wait in our spiritual bodies either in the presence of the saints or in a realm of regret until Jesus comes again to judge the living and the dead; and so, I believe that the thirst that the rich man is suffering is for the Living Water. For Jesus Christ. But having ignored the law and the prophets, the very word of God, the seemingly

rich man, has not Living Water after he dies. And no one can hand him a cup of cold water in Jesus' name at that point, (Matt 10:42). For there is a chasm that cannot be crossed. God draws a line after death. And as such it matters. It matters a great deal, *in fact more than anything else*, what people come to believe in while they live. It matters that we read and understand and apply God's word. It matters that we repent and believe in Jesus. It matters that we trust in God above riches or any false forms of security in this temporal world. It matters that the word transforms us so that we *don't* step over the hungry and the hurting whom humankind has overlooked to the extent that God has to *send dogs* to be kinder to them than we are. It matters. Because we will be held accountable. We are told this in 1 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive his due for things done in the body, whether good or bad." And so, we listen to the Apostle Paul today when he exhorts us to, "take hold of the life that really is life." This is a reassertion of God's word to us from the Old Testament where we are told: "The word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you may obey it. See, I have set before you today life and goodness, as well as death and disaster...So choose life that you may live," (Deuteronomy 30:14-15, 19). Paul quotes this scripture from Deuteronomy in Romans and concludes with: "If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved," (Rom 10:8). This is what the rich man was missing whereby he became eternally impoverished.

And what the Apostle Paul says to Timothy about God's word giving knowledge for salvation, godliness, and bearing fruit, I say to you:

"From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for instruction, for conviction, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the [people] of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work," (2 Timothy 3:15-17). *Amen.*