

“The One Whom God Helps”

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, there is a rich man who is clothed in fine linens and who feasts sumptuously every day. The name of that man is LAZARUS. That’s right ... Lazarus! It is Lazarus who is clothed in robes of righteousness and feasts at the banquet in the kingdom of heaven for all eternity.

In contrast to THIS truly rich man, Lazarus – is the man who seems to have it all in this life. He wears the best clothes – eats the finest foods – enjoys every bodily pleasure – living in luxury every day. He looks – to all the world, and maybe even to you – as if he is the most BLESSED by the Lord.

And then there’s the other man. Filthy rags for clothes – dumpster diving for crumbs that fall from the table – devoid of every bodily pleasure. His body is covered with painful sores. He lives in poverty and misery every single day. He looks – to all the world, and maybe even to you – as if he is the most CURSED by the Lord.

But things in this world – those things that you see with your EYES – are not as they often appear. It is not the “rich man” who is blessed – but rather, Lazarus. And it is not Lazarus who is cursed – but rather, “the rich man.” The “rich man” has every earthly comfort – and yet, he is poor. Lazarus, on the other hand, has no earthly comfort – yet, he is rich.

Many people consider earthly wealth and bodily comfort to be the most important things in life – and all who worship such false gods, like the “rich man” – misuse their wealth. In addition to all his worldly wealth – the Lord has given this man another gift – the gift of a poor beggar laying at his doorstep.

That’s right – Lazarus is a gift to the “rich man.” He is a gift because he provides the rich man with the opportunity to show mercy and compassion. Lazarus provides the “rich man” with a way to show his gratitude for such worldly wealth. Poor, sick, beggarly Lazarus provides the “rich man” the opportunity to demonstrate a proper use of his earthly possessions – an opportunity to love someone besides himself.

But as you know – it doesn't work out that way. His false gods require his full-time worship. In keeping with his extravagant and excessive lifestyle – the rich man's obsession with the pleasures of this life causes him to totally ignore Lazarus. It's not that the "rich man" is not aware of Lazarus, or his needs – in fact, he even knows Lazarus by name – but he is consumed by his lavish lifestyle.

The "rich man" has a different agenda. He is curved in on himself – his focus is on no one other than himself. He is obsessed with constantly experiencing for himself the best that life has to offer – and doesn't care for Lazarus and his desperate condition. Instead of helping Lazarus – he abandons him to digging through his garbage and having his open sores licked by the stray dogs in the neighborhood.

But finally the end comes – mercifully for Lazarus – and suddenly for the "rich man." And in spite of all his purple and fine linen – in spite of all the great feasts that he enjoyed sumptuously every day – the "rich man" finally ends up JUST AS DEAD as poor Lazarus. All the wealth in the world cannot save him from the final and ultimate equalizer – Death.

There was a Rich Man who was clothed in fine linens and who feasted sumptuously every day. The name of THAT Rich Man is JESUS. God the Father sent this Rich Man into your world – and to all the world, and maybe even to you – this Rich Man looked as though He was CURSED by God. He was laid in a food trough at His birth – He had no place to lay His head – He was despised and rejected by men – and surrounded by dogs in His death.

Listen to this portion of Psalm 22, which speaks of Jesus. "For dogs have surrounded Me. The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet. I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots."

I don't know about you – but He sure sounds a lot like Lazarus to me.

Sure, there was a time when this Rich Man was dressed in fine purple – it was just after His back was slashed and torn for you on Good Friday. Having feasted at the Last Supper, He then fasts, for you. What meager garments this Rich Man wore were soon stripped from Him and divided among the soldiers.

And as darkness covers the earth – the true Rich Man hangs dying on the Cross for you – His blood pouring out to atone for all your sin. He hangs there with nothing, the poorest of the poor, with not even a filthy rag to cover His nakedness.

There is another RICH MAN who is covered in fine linens and who feasts sumptuously every week – that RICH MAN is YOU. You are clothed in the fine garments of Christ's righteousness, bestowed on you in Holy Baptism – and you feast sumptuously at the Lord's Table.

To all the world – and maybe even to you – it looks as though you are a poor Lazarus. Dressed in the filthy rags of your sin – longing to eat what looks like nothing more than mere crumbs in the Lord's Supper – feeling like everyone has abandoned you, with your spiritual sores exposed for all the world to see.

You are Lazarus! Do you know what the name Lazarus means? It means "God is my help and comfort." You are Lazarus – because you are truly the rich one – the one who has the Lord as your help and comfort for all eternity.

The "rich man" – who was really poor – and who was in torment in Hades – wanted Lazarus to be raised from the dead to be his help and comfort. Instead it is Christ who is raised from the dead – a help and comfort for all who trust in Him.

Jesus Christ is raised from the dead in order to resurrect you – so that you, clothed in the robes of His righteousness – might feast with Him eternally. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.