

I

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which 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.

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

But 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.

And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.---*Luke 16: 19-26.*

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OUR God and Saviour does not lead men to hate wickedness and love virtue by negative precepts alone, but also by examples he makes clear the lessons of good conduct, bringing us both by deeds and words to the apprehension of a good and godly life. As he has often told us by the mouths of both prophets and evangelists, nay, even by his own voice also, that he turns away from the overbearing and haughty man of wealth, and loves a kindly disposition, and poverty when united to righteousness; so also in this parable, in order to confirm his teaching, he brings effective examples to attest the word, and in the narrative of the rich man and the ¹²⁰ beggar points out the lavish enjoyment of the one, the straitened life of the other, and the end to which each finally came, in order that we, having discerned the truth from the practices of others, may justly judge our own lives.

There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen.¹ By two brief words the Scripture ridicules and satirizes the prodigal and unmeasured wastefulness of those who are wickedly rich. For purple is an expensive and superfluous color, and fine linen is not necessary. It is the nature and delight of those that choose a well-ordered and frugal life to measure the use of necessary things by the need of them; and to avoid the rubbish of empty vainglory and deceptive amusement as the mother of wickedness. And that we may see more clearly the meaning and force of ¹²¹ this teaching, let us note the original use of clothing; to what extent it is to be employed when kept within rational limits.

What, then, says the law of the Just One? Sheep God created with well-fleeced skins, abounding in wool. Take them, shear it off, and give it to a skilful weaver, and fashion for yourself tunic and mantle, that you may escape both the distress of winter, and the harm of the sun's burning rays. But if you need for greater comfort lighter clothing in the time of summer, God has given the use of flax, and it is very easy for you to get from it a becoming covering, that at once clothes and refreshes you by its lightness. And while enjoying these garments, give thanks to the Creator that he

has not only made us, but has also provided for us comfort and security in living; but if, rejecting the sheep and the wool, the needful provision ¹²² of the Creator of all things, and departing from rational custom through vain devices and capricious desires, you seek out fine linen, and gather the threads of the Persian worms and weave the spider's airy web; and going to the dyer, pay large prices in order that he may fish the shell-fish out of the sea and stain the garment with the blood of the creature,---this is the act of a man surfeited, who misuses his substance, having no place to pour out the superfluity of his wealth. For this in the Gospel such a man is scourged, being portrayed as stupid and womanish, adorning himself with the embellishments of wretched girls.

Others again, according to common report are lovers of like vanity; but having cherished wickedness to a greater degree, they have not restricted their foolish invention even to the things already mentioned; ¹²³ but having found some idle and extravagant style of weaving, which by the twining of the warp and the woof, produces the effect of a picture, and imprints upon their robes the forms of all creatures, they artfully produce, both for themselves and for their wives and children, clothing beflowered and wrought with ten thousand objects. Thenceforth they become self-confident. They no longer engage in serious business; from the vastness of their wealth they misuse life, by not using it; ² they act contrary to Paul and contend against the divinely inspired voices, ³ not by words, but by deeds. For what he by word forbade, these men by their deeds support and confirm. When, therefore, they dress themselves and appear in public, they look like pictured walls in the eyes of those that meet them. And ¹²⁴ perhaps even the children surround them, smiling to one another and pointing out with the finger the picture on the garment; and walk along after them, following them for a long time. On these garments are lions and leopards; bears and bulls and dogs; woods and rocks and hunters; and all attempts to imitate nature by painting. For it was necessary, as it seems, to adorn not only their houses, but finally also their tunics and their mantles.

But such rich men and women as are more pious, have gathered up the gospel history and turned it over to the weavers; I mean Christ himself with all the disciples, and each of the miracles, as recorded in the Gospel. You may see the wedding of Galilee, and the water-pots; the paralytic carrying his bed on his shoulders; the blind man being healed with the clay; the woman with the bloody issue, taking hold of the ¹²⁵ border of the garment; the sinful woman falling at the feet of Jesus; Lazarus returning to life from the grave. In doing this they consider that they are acting piously and are clad in garments pleasing to God. But if they take my advice let them sell those clothes and honor the living image of God. Do not picture Christ on your garments. It is enough that he once suffered the humiliation of dwelling in a human body which of his own accord he assumed for our sakes. So, not upon your robes but upon your soul carry about his image.

Do not portray the paralytic on your garments, but seek out him that lies sick. Do not tell continually the story of the woman with the bloody issue, but have pity on the straitened widow. Do not contemplate the sinful woman kneeling before the Lord, but, with contrition for your ¹²⁶ own faults, shed copious tears. Do not sketch Lazarus rising from the dead, but see to it that you attain to the resurrection of the just. Do not carry the blind man about on your clothing, but by your good deeds comfort the living, who has been deprived of sight. Do not paint to the life the baskets of fragments that remained, but feed the hungry. Do not carry upon your mantles the water-pots which were filled in Cana of Galilee, but give the thirsty drink. Thus we have profited by the magnificent raiment of the rich man.

What follows must not, however, be overlooked; for there is added to the purple and fine linen, that he fared sumptuously every day. For of course both the adorning of one's self with useless magnificence, and serving the belly and the palate luxuriously, belong to the same disposition. Luxuriousness, then, is a thing hostile to ¹²⁷ virtuous life, but characteristic of idleness and inconsiderate wastefulness, of unmeasured enjoyment and slavish habit. And though at first blush it may seem a simple matter, it proves upon careful investigation to include manifold, great and many-headed evils. Luxuriousness would be impossible without great wealth; but to heap up riches without sin is also impossible; unless indeed it happens to some one rarely, as to Job, both to be abundantly rich, and at the same time to live in exact accord with justice. The man who will give himself to luxury, then, needs first a costly home, adorned like a bride, with gems and marbles and gold, and well adapted to the changes of the seasons of the year. For a dwelling is required that is warm, comfortable in winter, and turned toward the brightness of the south; but open toward the north in the summer, that ¹²⁸ it may be fanned by northern breezes, light and cool. Besides this, expensive stuffs are demanded to cover the seats, the couches, the beds, the doors. For the rich carefully adorn all things, even things inanimate, while the poor are pitifully naked. Moreover, enumerate the gold and silver vessels, the costly birds from Phasis, wines from Phoenicia, which the vines of Tyre produce in abundance and at a high price, for the rich; and all the rest of the wasteful equipment which only those who use it can name with particularity.

Now luxury, steadily increasing in elaborateness, even mingles Indian spices with the food; and the apothecaries furnish supplies to the cooks rather than to the physicians. Then consider the multitude that serve the table,---the

table-setters, the cupbearers, the stewardesses and the musicians that go before them, women musicians, ¹²⁹ dancing girls, flute-players, jesters, flatterers, parasites,---the rabble that follows vanity. That these things may be gained, how many poor are robbed! how many orphans maltreated! how many widows weep! how many, dreadfully tortured, are driven to suicide!

Like one who has tasted some Lethean stream, the self-indulgent soul absolutely forgets what it itself is, and the body to which it has been joined, and that some day it shall be released from this union, and again at some future time inhabit the reconstructed body. But when the appointed time shall come, and the inexorable command separates the soul from the body, then also shall come the recollection of things done in the past life, and vain repentance, too late! For repentance helps when the penitent has power of amendment, but the possibility of reform being ¹³⁰ taken away, grief is useless and repentance vain.

There was a certain beggar named Lazarus. The narrative describes him not simply as poor, destitute of money, and of the necessities of life, but also as afflicted with a painful disease, emaciated in body, houseless, homeless, incurable, cast down at the rich man's gate. And very carefully the narrative finally works up the circumstances of the beggar to signalize the hard-heartedness of him who had no pity; for the man that has no feeling of pity or sympathy for hunger or disease is an unreasoning wild beast in human form, deliberately and wickedly deceiving men; nay more, he is less sympathetic than the very beasts themselves; since, at least, when a hog is slaughtered, the rest of the drove feel some painful sensation and grunt miserably over the freshly spilled ¹³¹ blood; and the cattle that stand about when the bull is killed indicate their distress by passionate lowing. Flocks of cranes also when one of their mates is caught in the nets, flutter about him and fill the air with a sort of grieving clamor, seeking to release their mate and fellow. And how unnatural that man, endowed with reason and blessed with culture, who has also been taught goodness by the example of God, should take so little thought of his kinsman in pain and misfortune!

So the suffering but grateful pauper lay without feet, or else certainly he would have fled from the accursed and haughty man, and sought another place instead of the inhospitable gate, which was closed against the poor; he lay without hands, having not even a palm to stretch forth for alms; his very organs of speech were so impaired that his voice was hoarse and harsh; in fact, ¹³² he was quite mutilated in all his members, the wreck of a foul disease, a pitiable illustration of human infirmity.⁴ Yet not even such a list of misfortunes moved the haughty man to attention, but he passed the beggar as if he were a stone, deliberately filling up the measure of his sin; for, if accused, he could not utter this common and specious excuse, "I did not know: I was not aware: I did not notice the beggar howling." For the beggar lay before his gate, a spectacle as he went in and out to make the condemnation of the proud man inevitable. He was even denied the crumbs from the table; and while the rich man was bursting with fulness, he was wasting away with want. Therefore it would have been fair and right to have made the Canaanitish Phoenician woman the teacher of the ¹³³ misanthropic man of wealth, saying those things that are written: "Haughty wretch, even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table,⁵ and did you not think your brother, one who belongs to the same race, worthy of that bounty?" But the dogs were carefully fed, the watch-dogs by themselves and the hunting-dogs by themselves, and they were deemed worthy of a roof, and beds and attendants were carefully allotted to them; but the image of God was cast on the earth uncared for and trampled on,---that image which the great Builder and Maker of all fashioned with his own hand, if one regards Moses as having given credible testimony to the genesis of man.

Now if the story of Lazarus had ended at this point, and the nature of things were such that our life was truly represented by ¹³⁴ the inequality of his career with that of the rich man, I should have cried aloud with indignation,---that we who are created equal, live on such unequal terms with men of the same race. But since that which remains is good to hear, do you, poor man, who groan over the past, take courage from the sequel, when you learn the blessed enjoyment of your fellow in poverty. For you will find that the just Judge renders exact judgment, so that the man who has lived a life of ease groans, and he who has had hardship finds luxury, each receiving his due reward.

And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom. Do you see who they were who ministered to the poor and just man, and who took him to heaven? For angels were his body-guard, looking upon him gently and mildly, and betokening by ¹³⁵ their manner the attendance and relief that awaited him. And he was taken and placed in the bosom of the patriarch, a statement which affords ground for doubt to those who like to question minutely the deep things of the Scriptures, for if every just man, when he dies, should be taken to the same place, the bosom would be a great one and expanded to an endless extent, if it were intended to accommodate the whole multitude of the saints. But if this is absolutely impossible---for the bosom can scarcely embrace one man and hardly two infants,---the thought presents itself to us that the material bosom is the symbol of a spiritual truth;

for what is it that is meant? Abraham, he says, receives those who have lived an upright life. Then tell us, wonderful Luke,---for I will address you as though visibly present,---why, when there were many just men, even older than Abraham, ¹³⁶ did you withhold this distinction from his predecessors, passing in silence over Enoch, Noah and many others who were like these in their manner of life? But perhaps I understand you, and my judgment does not go wide of the mark. For Abraham was a minister of Christ, and, beyond other men, received the things of the revelation of Christ, and the mystery of the Trinity was adequately bodied forth in the tent of this old man when he entertained the three angels as wayfaring men. In short, after many mystical enigmas, he became the friend of God, who in after time put on flesh and, through the medium of this human veil, openly associated with men. On this account, Christ says that Abraham's bosom is a sort of fair haven, and sheltered resting-place for the just. For we all have our salvation and expectation of the life to come, in Christ, who, in his ¹³⁷ human descent, sprang from the flesh of Abraham. And I think the honor in the case of this old man has reference to the Saviour, who is the judge and rewarder of virtue, and who calls the just with a gracious voice, saying: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." ⁶ And it came to pass that the beggar died. Two sides of the beggar's life are indicated: on the one hand is shown his poverty, and on the other his modesty and the humility of his character. Let not, therefore, the man who is without substance, in want of money, and clothed in pitiable garb appropriate to himself the praise of virtue, nor think that want will secure for him salvation. For not he who is poor from necessity is commended, but he is held up to admiration who of his own accord moderates his desires. For the poverty of ¹³⁸ those who are in extreme want, and have at the same time an unmanageable or incorrigible disposition, leads to many evil deeds of daring. Whenever I have come near a ruler's judgment-seat, I have seen that all housebreakers and kidnappers, thieves and robbers, and even murderers, were poor men, unknown, houseless and hearthless. So that from this it is clear that the Scripture accounts that poor man happy who bears his hardships with a philosophic mind, and shows himself nobly steadfast in the face of his circumstances in life, and does not wickedly do any evil deed to gain for himself the enjoyment of luxury. Such a man the Lord describes even more clearly in the first of the beatitudes, where he says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." ⁷ So, not every poor man is righteous, but only one who is like Lazarus; nor is every ¹³⁹ rich man to be despaired of, but only one who has the disposition of him that neglected Lazarus; and in real life we easily find witnesses of this truth. For who is richer than was the godly Job? Nevertheless his great prosperity did not divorce him from righteousness nor, to speak briefly, did it estrange him from virtue. Who is poorer than was Iscariot? His poverty did not secure salvation for him; but while associating with the eleven poor men who loved wisdom, and with the Lord himself, who for our sakes voluntarily became poor, ⁸ he was carried away by the wickedness of his covetous disposition and finally was guilty even of the betrayal.

It is also worth while to examine intelligently how each of these men when dead was carried forth. The poor man when he fell asleep had angels as his guards and ¹⁴⁰ attendants, who carried him, full of joyful expectation, to the place of rest; and the rich man, Christ says, died and was buried. It is not possible in any respect to improve the declaration of the Scriptures, since a single sentence adequately indicates the unhonored decease of the rich man. For the sinner when he dies is indeed buried, being earthy in body, and worldly in soul. He debases the spiritual within him to the material by yielding to the enticements of the flesh, leaving behind no good memorial of his life, but, dying the death of beasts, is wrapped in unhonored forgetfulness. For the grave holds the body, and Hades the soul,---two gloomy prisons dividing between them the punishment of the wicked. And who would not blame the wretched man for his thoughtlessness?---since when he was on earth he prided himself, held his head high, exulted over all who lived about him and ¹⁴¹ were of the same race, deeming those whom he chanced to meet hardly better than ants and worms, and vainly boasting of his short-lived glory. But when he dies, and like a scourged slave is deprived of those usurped possessions of which in his folly he thought himself master, he is as deeply humiliated as he was previously highly exalted, and, uttering complaints like a lamenting old woman, calls loudly and vainly on the patriarch, saying, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." He seeks mercy, which he had not given when he had the power of benefiting another, and demands that Lazarus shall come down into the fire to him to help him. He prays that he may suck the finger of the leper slightly moistened in water. Such is ¹⁴² the thoughtlessness of those who love the body. This is the end of those who love wealth and pleasure. It therefore becomes the wise man who is provident of the future, to consider the parable as a sort of medicine, preventive of sickness; and to flee the experience of like evil, preferring the sympathetic and philanthropic disposition as the condition of the life to come. For the Scripture has presented the admonition to us dramatically in the persons of particular characters in order to impress upon us by a concrete and vivid example the law of good conduct, so that we may never think lightly of the precepts of the Scripture as terrifying in word only, without inflicting the threatened punishment. I know that most men, snared by such fancies, take the liberty of sinning. But the Scripture before us teaches quite the contrary, that neither any confession

of ¹⁴³ the justice of the judgment lightens the punishment, nor does pity for the one in torment lessen the penalty ordained; if indeed it is necessary that the Scripture attest the word of the patriarch. For after the manifold supplications of the rich man, and after hearing countless piteous appeals, Abraham was neither moved by the laments of the suppliant, nor did he remove from his pain the one who was bitterly scourged; but with austere mind he confirmed the final judgment, saying that God had allotted to each according to his desert. And he said to the rich man, Since in life you lived in luxury through the calamities of others, what you are suffering is imposed upon you as the penalty of your sin. But to him who once had hardships, and was trampled on and endured in bitterness life in the flesh, there is allotted here a sweet and joyful existence. ¹⁴⁴ And besides, he says, There is also a great gulf which prevents them from intercourse with one another, and separates those who are being punished from those who are being honored, that they may live apart from each other, not mixing the rewards of good and evil deeds. And I suppose the parable to be a material representation of a spiritual truth. For let us not imagine that there is in reality a ditch digged by angels, like the trenches on the outer borders of military camps, but Luke by the similitude of a gulf has represented for us the separation of those who have lived virtuously and those who have lived otherwise. And this thought Isaiah also stamps for us with his approval, speaking somewhat thus: Is the hand of the Lord not strong to save, or is his ear heavy that it cannot hear? But our sins stand between us and God. ⁹

[Footnotes renumbered and moved to the end]

1. ¹ Luke 16: 19.

2. ¹ 1 Corinthians 7: 31,

3. ² 1 Timothy 2: 9, 10.

4. ¹ The disease of Lazarus is here represented as leprosy.

5. ¹ Matthew 15:27.

6. ¹ Matthew 25: 34.

7. ¹ Matthew 5:3.

8. ¹ 2 Corinthians 8:9.

9. ¹ Isaiah (59: 1, 2) Lxx.
