

Pastor T. C. Arnold
1st Sunday after Trinity
Luke 16:19-31
June 18th, 2017

Today's world glamorizes the rich and famous. We want what they have. Not only that, we want our children to be known and they want to be known. Popularity would be fantastic if it was also accompanied by wealth. I'm not sure that many of us would turn away fame and fortune. Sure, we want to be known, but maybe we want to be independently wealthy so that we don't have to work anymore... so that we will never have to worry about how to pay for insurance, how to pay for college, and all those other big expenses we think about. But I would venture to guess, you didn't grow up independently wealthy. You don't even really have any idea what that would be like... though I know you would like to find out. I would guess you are not someone famous who is known by people you don't know.

I didn't grow up like this. You probably didn't either. In our congregation we have people who grew up on farms, in the city, or in the suburbs. I grew up in a blue collar town where friends of mine came from families that worked for the oil refinery or made shotgun shells at the Olin Winchester factory in East Alton. In families like this we learn quickly that one thing is "sufficient." More than one thing is often not necessary, not possible, or just plain just excessive.

But you know how hard mom and dad had to work to support our families. You know how hard all of you had to work to bring up your kids. It really does put everything into perspective. I'm convinced those "sufficient things" in our lives mean more to us because we worked hard for them – those who love us worked hard for us. But I see a world today, and I'm sure you do to, where no longer this word "sufficient" is properly understood. Or, if it is understood, it is being ignored. And you see, I think in many ways we have gone with the flow in being more excessive with the things in our lives than relying on just what is sufficient.

That's our world today and that's what we learn from. That's what we see and that's what we mimic. That's what looks fun and looks great and that's what we want for ourselves as well. In a world of excessiveness I'm not sure we understand anymore, to the degree that many of us once did, our kids even don't understand what sufficiency really is. Our attitude is, "if what is sufficient is enough, then more must be better."

But we have to be aware that more than enough might seem nice, but with it comes an extra measure of burden. How are we going to be good stewards of these "extra" blessings? How are we going to recognize that "the more" that is ours comes from our Lord just the same as everything else that God gives us that we really do need – house, home, food, drink, and all that we need to support our daily lives? You see, it's not a sin to have "more". It's not a sin to have more than enough. In reality, we all have more than enough. But the Lord is going to flat out ask you, "What are you going to do with the, 'more than sufficient' blessings you have been given today?"

And here is where we are in our text for today. This text recounts a situation that the Lord uses as an example, a parable, to tell a story to the Pharisees. He tells them of a rich man and Lazarus. Of course the rich man put all of his trust and love into what he had, but Lazarus loved the Lord. Lazarus received his reward by grace and through faith but the rich man only received his reward in what he possessed because he did not trust in the Lord's reward of eternal life.

At the end of this parable, the rich man asks God through God's servant Abraham if He would possibly send someone from the dead, some other means than the Word of God (Moses and the Prophets) to warn his family who do not trust in the Lord either. But Abraham answers, "They

have what is sufficient. They have the Word of God through Moses and the Prophets. If they are not going to put their trust in what is sufficient then they will not put their trust in what is more than sufficient.”

First of all, let me explain something about this parable. It’s a parable that our Lord gives as an example it’s not a true situation. We know that it’s not true because in reality there is not communication between heaven and hell like we hear in the text. This is simply a parable, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning that Jesus uses to prove a point to the unbelieving Pharisees who thought they were measured in the eyes of God by what they did and what they had.

Secondly, this parable really does give us a stern warning. It tells us that we need to guard against anything that might possibly influence us to think that God is less than sufficient in what He gives to us. We need to guard against those things which get in our way of recognizing God as the only true way as well. There are so many things, extra things that work so hard at diverting our eyes away from God and His gifts. There are so many things that make us think, make us believe, those things are more important than what we receive here today – His Word, His love, His forgiveness. You see, though we have been given so much – so much more – so many extra blessings – and truly they are blessings, this never precludes the fact that God’s grace is sufficient for us when it comes to our Life everlasting.

That’s what He says to us in 2 Corinthians chapter twelve: “*My grace is sufficient for you.*” That’s what the Lord tells us. That’s all we need. I know we are in a world that believes we need more but there is only one thing that is sufficient. There is one thing that we need. Jesus even shares with us what that one thing is to Mary and Martha at their house. He says, “*There is one thing needful.*” That one thing was the Lord Himself. That one thing was His Words and His life. That one thing is the reason why Mary sat at the feet of Jesus while Martha was busy with so many other things. That one thing was sufficient for Mary and that one thing is sufficient for you and me as well.

St. Augustine once famously said that in our hearts is a God size hole that can only be filled by the love. It can’t be filled with the pleasures of this world. It can’t be filled with fame or stuff. It can only be filled with the blood of Jesus... with what He pours out for you.

Brothers and sisters in Christ – What the Lord has given to us is sufficient. It’s sufficient to share His Word and grow His Church – we don’t use modern day marketing tactics and flashy sales pitches. It’s sufficient to share His life with our neighbor. We don’t need to have a theological degree, be a good speaker, be so well read and know our Bible inside and out. It’s sufficient for us today – all made that way because of one simple thing to us and one great work from our Savior. That Work was His death on the cross. That’s why we are here. We are here because that is sufficient news and reason enough to sit in the pews. Because our Lord has done the sufficient work, your life has been sufficiently won – 100% by His sacrifice on the cross for you.

The rich man in the text wanted more because to him the Word of God was not sufficient. But you see, we can’t add anything to what God has given because what He has given is everything. You can’t give more than everything. And, you don’t need more than everything either. But what we can do is take out. We can take out and share with others and He shares with you today more than enough for our lives today. That’s what we get on Sundays – we get more than enough. All the forgiveness and life – that’s eternal life. Our life. Amen.

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