

The Twenty Second Sunday after Pentecost
Luke 16:19-31

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. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. (KJV)

Believers are blessed to hear the Gospel in each Divine Liturgy. The Gospel offers life-changing and life-enriching wisdom. The Gospel is a direct experience with the life and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Attentive believers heed each Gospel message and make it a part of their lives to grow in Christ. The Gospel is to be valued and made a part of life throughout life. Attentiveness is a lesson of the current Gospel message.

The rich man in the present Gospel was inattentive to poor Lazarus nearby suffering at the gate. Only when it was too late and the rich man had died did he think about Lazarus.

Too often the Gospel is taken for granted and not made a part of life. Too often the Gospel is ignored and not made a part of life when life appears to be going well.

In the present world there are countless suffering people nearby in communities wherever the Gospel is preached. Attentive and serious believers reach out to help the suffering persons nearby.

Active and vibrant parishes reach out beyond the church walls to help suffering neighbors in the communities where they are located. Parishes seeking to advance the Gospel find ways to nourish hungry souls in their communities.

The rich man was focused only on himself. He experienced suffering due to his selfishness. The Gospel teaches love of neighbor is important. (Mk 12:29-31) The Gospel teaches that Jesus Christ identifies with the needy and suffering. (Mt 25:31-46)

Believers hearing the Gospel today do well to engage in serious self-examination. The Nativity Fast begins later this week. Now is the time to make sure personal efforts include helping suffering neighbors in need.

Now is the time to repent of a narrow vision of focusing only on the self to the detriment of suffering neighbors nearby. God is present to answer the prayers of believers choosing to live in greater conformity with the Gospel.

The world is filled with deception seeking to command and capture personal attention and keep the focus of the life away from the Lord God. The Nativity Fast inspires serious believers to reassess and refine their focus on the Lord God.

Believers commit to following the Lord Jesus Christ at Holy Baptism. The commitment to following Christ is fulfilled by living according the Gospel teachings of Christ.

Heeding the lesson of the Gospel of the Rich Man and Lazarus draws attention to suffering in parish communities. Attentive parishioners take action to help the suffering in parish neighborhoods.

Suffering in the world is not limited to a certain race or ethnic identity. Suffering includes men, women and children of all ages. Love of Christ in the heart will move attentive believers to deliberate action to help alleviate suffering.

The rich man in the present Gospel could have changed the outcome of his life if he was attentive and helped poor Lazarus nearby. Attentive believers hearing the Gospel today improve the outcome of their lives by beneficial action.

Many ways exist for believers to help suffering neighbors. Recognizing the presence of suffering is the basic first step. Showing personal love and care for suffering neighbors has a healing effect.

At times financial aid or a form of material support can make a difference in a neighbor's life. Making a meal for or spending time with a sick neighbor can help lift the neighbor's spirit.

Parishes do well to assess outreach efforts to ensure the Gospel is readily available to the hungry souls in the community. Priests benefit from self-assessment during the Nativity Fast in considering outreach to the needy nearby.

Love of God and love of neighbor are inseparable. The Gospel message of the Rich Man and Lazarus heightens awareness of suffering and the need for beneficial action.

The Twenty Second Sunday after Pentecost. Holy Great Martyr Menas. Holy Martyr Stephen of Decani, King of Serbia. November 11/2, 2024.
Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic