

Fellow witnesses of the Ascended Christ, I told you last Sunday. We confessed it together in the words of the Athanasian Creed: “Whoever does not worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, will without doubt perish eternally.” Do you remember, or have you conveniently forgotten? We see the result of not believing what God has commanded and promised us. The result is hell. Look at the rich man, he died and is now in the torments of hell. The rich man is in hell because he did not believe what Moses and the Prophets had proclaimed concerning the living God. The rich man did not believe God’s Command to, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind; and the result is hell. The rich man did not place his fear love and trust in God above all things; and the result is pain and torture in hell.

I warned you last Sunday and now you can see with the rich man, God is not lying; there is a hell, a place of continuous torment and suffering and pain. God does not lie. He cannot be mocked. The Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Ghost is a jealous God, punishing the children for the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Him, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Him. God threatens to punish us for our sins and shortcomings, therefore we should fear His wrath and not do anything against Him or His commandments.

The story that Jesus tells us in the Gospel reading is not about being rich or poor it is about faith in the one true God. Both the rich man and Lazarus were Jews, who had heard the Word of Moses and the Prophets, but only Lazarus had believed that God was the God of mercy and life. The rich man trusted in mammon and the good things in this life, but these things could not find favor with him before God. The rich man’s experiences told him that God must love him, and so he placed his faith in that experience. Lazarus trusted in the living God, the God of mercy. In his

poverty, Lazarus had nothing to trust in but the Word of God, for his experience of suffering and shame seemed to teach him that God was not a God of mercy. In the end, men are divided according to those who have believed the Word of God and those who have not. Those who reject the God revealed in the Holy Scriptures will suffer torment and hell forever, but those who believe the Word of God, who hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it, will have eternal life.

The rich man asked Abraham to send Lazarus to him to dip his finger in water to cool his tongue. Even in death all the rich man can think of is physical and earthly pleasures. Then the rich man tries to show Abraham that he loves his neighbors as himself, by begging Lazarus to go to his brothers that he would testify to them, lest they also come to the place of torment. Abraham said to him, "They already have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them." The rich man then finally reveals the hardness of men's hearts when he says, "No, but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent." But Abraham said, "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead." In other words, if you do not believe the Word of God, as revealed to us in the pages of Sacred Scripture you will not believe Jesus, who rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and is coming again to judge the quick and the dead, if He were standing right here in front of you. For the Holy Bible is the Word of God, it is absolute truth. Jesus' words will lead you and guide you in the Way, the Truth and the Life. God and His Word go hand in hand, they cannot be separated.

Fellow witness of the risen and ascended Christ, what did you confess at the beginning of the service? You said that you were a poor, miserable sinner. You confessed that you had sinned against God by all your sins and iniquities. Your sins are those you are born with, original sins, and those you yourself have committed since, actual sins. Iniquity is immorality, a failure to keep any of the Ten Commandments, an eager willingness to live an ungodly and unholy life. You said that you had offended God and justly, that is rightly, deserved His temporal punishment, that is

punishment during our earthly life; and eternal punishment, that is forever and ever punishment.

You confessed at the beginning of the service that because of your sin, because you are evil, because you do not rightly worship the Holy Trinity, God has every right to destroy you, to punish you, condemn you to hell. You are only able to make that confession because of the Holy Spirit who is in you. You are only able to make that confession because you have believed the Word of God recorded in the pages of the Holy Bible.

After you confessed your sins, then you said that you were heartily sorry for your sins and that you sincerely repented of them, desiring to turn away from all sins and everything that comes between you and a loving relationship with God. You prayed for God the Father's boundless mercy upon you. You prayed that God the Father would not look upon your sins but upon the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Like Lazarus, you did not trust in your works or your earthly possessions; because you have nothing to give to God. You beg for mercy, trusting that because of Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the grave, that God the Father would be gracious and merciful to you, a poor, sinful being. You are able to make that confession because you believe what God has told you in the words of Holy Scripture. You know that your works are as filthy rags before the eyes of God; all that you are and have is found solely in Jesus Christ.

Now let us turn in the folders in our pews to the Fourth Chief Part of Martin Luther's Small Catechism. Today we are reading from the third part of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, which is *How can water do such great things?* We recite it together.

***How can water do such great things? Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this Word of God in the water. For without God's word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it***

**is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three:**

**"He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying."  
(Titus 3:5–8)**

What is the Sacrament of Baptism? Why do you bring your infant children to be baptized? Why, if you are an adult and are not baptized, do you get baptized for the first time? The answer is the benefits of Baptism. You want the forgiveness of sins. Baptism now saves you. You want to be rescued from death and the devil and hell. Baptism now saves you. You want the promise of heaven and eternal salvation. Baptism now saves you. This is what the Word of God promises and declares. That is what you trust in. You believe what the Apostles have spoken concerning the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Ghost; that is the name you have been baptized into. You trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. He alone is the Resurrection and the Life. You believe what Jesus has taught you concerning the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Like Lazarus you have nothing to bring to God, you depend solely upon Him. You want to be a child of the heavenly Father you want to be a brother of Christ; and so you come, bringing nothing, only receiving with thanksgiving the good gifts of grace, mercy and peace that Jesus so eagerly and generously desires to give. God may punish sin, but His desire to show us mercy and forgiveness is so much greater. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the God of love; He has sent His Son Jesus not to condemn the world but to save it. The name Lazarus means, "The one whom God helps" and truly the one who God helps is you and me and He does that through the life-giving waters of Holy Baptism. In ✠Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Almighty and ever-present Lord, in Baptism's waters Your Holy Spirit drowned and killed our old sinful nature. By that same Spirit, guide us to live the new life of faith delivered to us in Baptism. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, You alone are the God of power and might. Save us from temptations which allure us to place our trust and love in false idols. Help us to fear, love, and trust in You above all things. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Creator of all things, abundantly bless the work of those vocations You use to provide daily bread. Grant favorable weather to those who farm, so that their crops may be plentiful. Remove all corruption from the workplace and give to all workers servant hearts of integrity as they use their skills to serve their neighbor. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Loving God, dwell with the sick, the homebound, and those suffering in any way (*especially those dealing with floods and tornadoes and fires*). Heal their sicknesses and wipe away their tears, according to Your divine plan. Lift their hearts away from their earthly suffering and draw them to Your good promises of forgiveness and eternal life; trusting that your good and gracious will is being done. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, thank you for all the blessings You bestow upon us. For the gift of family: husband and wife, father and mother, son and daughter. We pray Your blessing upon all those who will be married this summer, including Tonya Hartwig and Clayton Reynolds, who will be joined together, as one flesh, next weekend. And we pray for all expectant mothers, that they would be safely brought to the time of delivery. Continue to bless us and all families with Your abiding presence and peace. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Giving God, the many who gather here today unite as one as we receive Your precious body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. As we kneel together, use this Sacrament to increase in us faith toward You and sacrificial love for one another. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into Your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**