

September 25 2016

Scripture Lesson

Psalm 91

I Timothy 6:6-19

Luke 16:19-31, p. 956

Sermon *Beware of Self Indulgence*

When I was about 11 I was visiting my friend on a nice summer day. Her older sister was dating a man and he was there waiting for my friend's sister so that they could go out for the day. We were in the yard and all of a sudden the man jumped up on a stump and said at the top of his voice, "Repent, Repent now you sinners or you shall go to hell when you die" "I tell you this is the word of the Lord and if you don't listen you will go to hell when you die."

Well, that certainly got my attention. Even though my family didn't go to church I knew what hell was and it wasn't pretty.

I think that the parable that Bill read today is trying to do the same thing, get our attention. We have heard the parable of the rich fool, who died and didn't get to enjoy all his wealth. He didn't think of sharing that wealth either. We have heard the parable of the shrewd manager, who even though he was clever in trying to cover his you know what, he wasn't thinking of anyone but himself. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus really lays it on the line. The rich man enjoyed his life of wealth. He wore his clothes of purple, a color that was only for the wealthy. He enjoyed feasting sumptuously every day; he lived in a gated community, more signs of being wealthy. Meanwhile, just outside his gate lay Lazarus who probably couldn't even get up to beg for food and just wished that some of the food that fell from the table of the rich man would make it his way. He was covered in sores, so I am sure people avoided even coming close to him. Then to add insult to injury the village dogs came and licked his sores. Could their lives be any farther apart?

They both die. Where does the rich man find himself? In hell, and it is unbearably hot. He looks up and there he sees Lazarus in heaven with Abraham. He tries to get Abraham to have Lazarus bring him cool water because the heat was unbearable. But Abraham says "Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things and Lazarus in like manner evil things. But now he is

comforted here and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to here.”

Sounds pretty final to me, there are no do-overs. So what can we learn from these 3 parables? Some would say that it means money is the root of all evil. I don't think that it is the money that is the root of all evil but the love of money over anything else is the root. All of these men who had money or access to money in the case of the shrewd manager could have made different choices in how their money was used. If they had done that, the outcomes of their lives would have been very different.

That should give all of us food for thought. I think I could say that everyone here lives comfortably and has what we need to have a roof over our heads, food on the table, and the ability to do the things that we enjoy. We need to be mindful that there are others in this community, this country, and all over the world whose life is more like the one that Lazarus had. We should be ever mindful of those who may not have all that they need to have a roof over their heads, food on the table, and the ability to do the things that they enjoy.

I think that is what the parables are trying to teach us. We need to remember not to think of ourselves first. We need to remember God's greatest commandment which is: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” And if you don't love God first, then your neighbor and then yourself, the consequences are not pretty.

I encourage you to read the insert in today's bulletin about a project funded by the Neighbors in Need Offering in 2015. Next week will be another insert about a project in 2014 that was funded by the Neighbors in Need Offering and I encourage you to read that one also.

Both projects did good things to help the people in that community whose lives were more like Lazarus than the rich man. There is a quote from the insert that will be in your bulletin next week. It is from Walt Zawaski who runs the Potato Project. He says, “The work we do is not about the physical things we build, or the credit, notoriety, or even accolades we may garner. The work we do is about the

one thing that neither any civil war nor anything else can ever destroy. Everything comes down to building relationships. Relationships between ourselves and others, and relationships between God and God's people, is what matters, alone."

We as a church family are very generous and think of others in all the charitable things that we do. We need to remember to continue to do such things.

There is one other aspect of putting God and our neighbors first that I would like to address. That is in the things that we say or neglect to say to the people in our lives or even the ones that we meet on the street.

I imagine that all of us have had one of those weeks where you think you are doing your best and every time that you turn around someone is knocking you down by either things that they say that are not complimentary or are hurtful, or they are not appreciative of what you are doing to help their lives be easier or better. Well, I had a week like that this past week and it just reinforced to me that we need to be mindful of what we say to people or about people. In most cases, that person is doing the best that they can with what they have to give. You may not agree with how they do things but they are doing things. If it is something that you can do and you think you can do it better than maybe they would appreciate your help if approached as you want to help. Wouldn't that be a better way to do it than to make remarks behind their backs? Also remember a compliment or even a hug goes a long way in making that person's day. Would we like to be on the receiving end of hurtful remarks ourselves? How would we like to be treated? Remember, Love God first and then your neighbor next.

In closing, I wanted to tell you that the words I said the man in my story said were not exact quotes but he did get on the stump and try to preach hellfire and brimstone to my friend and me. Many of you know that man and my friend's sister. He had a great career as a teacher and is now a minister. In fact, that fall when I went back to school he was my science teacher. That man is Mark Wendle and my friend's sister is his wife Betty. Amen.