

TRINITY NEWS

The Distance Between Our Perception of Reality and What Actually Appears

The Gospel story at Luke 16:19-31 has a setting with reminiscences of another ancient tradition. It is about the journey and destiny of two men, one rich and one poor. The Rich Man feasts sumptuously. He is not named. The poor man is a beggar who lies at the rich man's gate. His name is Lazarus, not connected to the Lazarus of John 11 who was raised after burial by Jesus. The implication is that the rich man does not care about the unhappy state of the poor man who lies at his gate, looking for crumbs from the rich man's table. The poor man dies and is carried away by the angels to be with Abraham, in a place held by the Jews to be next to heaven. The rich man also dies and goes to Hades, the Greek name for the underworld, somewhat like the Hebrew notion of Sheol, a place of shades and dust and the apparent dreariness of death. Here it has the added notion of a place of torment and flames. It added "fuel to the fire" for Dante's imaginative Inferno.

The rich man can see Abraham and Lazarus by his side "far away". He now wants Lazarus to help him: "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames." Roles are reversed, and now the rich man needs the poor man. The long response of Abraham follows. It reflects their respective situations on earth and the great chasm that is fixed between them at this point. It is an attempt to find a connection between punishment and redemption, something that we are all looking for one way or another.

This parable attempts to bridge the apparent gap between this life and the next. The rich man wants Lazarus to be sent to witness to the rich man's brothers so that they also may not come into the place of torment occupied now by the rich man, their brother. It is the cry of the damned seeking for mercy.

For once, the teaching of Jesus stays with the Jewish tradition rather than with the fresh in-breaking of the reign of God and the radically new configurations of Jesus' message. One who rises from the dead will not necessarily persuade those who do not see this new life prefigured in the traditions of Moses and the prophets.

This parable is a glimpse of the Jewish map of the soul and pictures of the afterlife. It is no doubt original to the teaching of the historical Jesus before his resurrection.

We all find ourselves in a place in life. It is our life story and we have to live it. What put the beggar into his situation, and what put the rich man into his situation of heartless neglect of someone within his sight is unknown to us.

We all have to live our story, that story, our life, which is more important than what people think of us and the obstacles that are put in our way to prevent us realizing our story or turning it into a better one. **“True end is not in the reaching of the limit, but in a completion which is limitless”** – Rabindranath Tagore. Or in Jesus’ words, “I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10b).

Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

Wednesday.

- Bible Study, 10:00am
- Group discussion, 7:30pm, Parish office

Thursday.

- Midweek Eucharist, 10:00am, Chapel

NEXT WEEK’S READINGS:

Habakkuk 1:1-6,12-13;2:1-4;

Psalm 37

2 Timothy 1:6-14;

Luke 17:5-10

ON SALE!

*Copies of a book entitled “**With Bigger Eyes and Heart in Head: Being Anglican in Post-Windsor Time**” are now available from Bishop Joel Pachao at the Diocesan Office in Baguio City, or through the Prime Bishop’s Office in Quezon City. This is written by The Rt. Rev. Artemio Zabala, who currently serves as a retired bishop in residence in the Diocese of Los Angeles.*

Proceeds from the sale of this book will go to a mission fund in Baguio to support initiatives for development of lay ministry of Anglicans.
