**Scripture is Enough**

Based on [Luke 16:19-31](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk16.19-31)

Preached on June s23, 2019

The First Sunday after Trinity

Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

There are so many doctrines that the Holy Spirit establishes through the mouth of Our Lord Jesus Christ in this powerful story of Lazarus and the Rich man, that we could never plumb the depths of the riches of the knowledge of God.

Universalism is condemned. Not everyone will be saved. Eternal destiny at death.  There is a chasm between the saved and the damned that can never be breached. The departed souls carried to Abraham’s side are forever quarantined from those unclean souls that are sent to Hades.

Justice of God is vindicated. Everyone gets what they deserve in the end.  Those who unjustly received good in this life, will receive bad in the next. Those who unjustly received bad in this life, will receive good in the next. Justice is about setting things right…and no one will “get away” with anything. God will set it all right.

These teachings bring a sobering call to all who hear them to use their time in this life wisely, because happiness and suffering in this life is only temporary, happiness and suffering after death is eternal. And still people don’t believe them, because they don’t believe the word of God. And so the central teaching of this story of Lazarus and the Rich man are not these things, hell and judgment and justice. These are simply “a given.” What Abraham teaches the Rich Man, and what Jesus teaches us…is that if people won’t believe the Bible, they will never believe.

 As I said, this story gives a vivid and poignant portrayal of heaven and hell…especially hell, that ought to cause any sensible soul to amend his life. But we hear lots of childrens stories, fairy tales about how the good guys win and the bad guys get what’s coming to them. And many today believe that the bible is a book of fairy tales. Indeed, some are even so bold to say that Jesus himself is a fairy tale. Many self-proclaimed Christians boast in having a faith that isn’t based on the bible; or obedience to any such “paper Pope.” They claim that they don’t need God’s written word…(though they prefer to say it’s not really God’s Word…that the Bible is so riddled with errors and contradictions that disqualify it from serious consideration of enlightened folk.)

It is in the same spirit that the Rich Man tries to argue with Father Abraham. The Rich Man wants Abraham to send Lazarus back from the dead to warn his five brothers, who are living life like he did. The Rich Man here assumes that this hellfire could be escaped with the proper warning. And, indeed, had he received the right kind of warning ahead of time, he wouldn’t be there now.

Abraham says, your brothers “have Moses and the Prophets…let them listen to them.” “Moses and the prophets” are dead of course…but their message isn’t. The Bible has the writings of Moses and the Prophets where they give warning that such torment will come to those who live sumptuously while ignoring the needs of their brother. In short, Abraham says, “They don’t need poor Lazarus to warn them, they have the Bible to warn them.”

The Rich Man responds that the bible isn’t sufficient. He says that the Bible isn’t a good enough warning because they won’t believe it. But if Lazarus comes back from the dead and tells them directly, they will listen, repent, and avoid hell. Abraham says, “If they won’t listen to the bible, neither will they listen to a miraculous preacher.” Literally, “If they won’t hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.”

The central teaching here is that the bible is sufficient for faith. Those who believe it to be a fairy tale, won’t believe a miracle either. And with this are admonitions to you, the church, the true Israel. First, when people say they would be Christian, but they just don’t know why they should believe the bible…don’t believe them. They might think that’s true, but they are wrong. Jesus says anyone who doesn’t believe the bible, won’t believe anything else that speaks the truth of God. This line is from Satan, who uses it to convince Christians to give up trying to convert the world with the bible.

Second, many Christians are convinced that we can’t quote the bible to people who reject it’s authority. And this has created an enlightened caste of super-christians who think that their faith is so strong, it’s doesn’t need the bible. Some say that their faith is based on a personal encounter with God, or with daily conversations with the Holy Spirit. But Jesus says these things, if true, cannot replace the bible.

Someone might say, “Pastor, that’s all well and good…I like the bible and read it all the time…but we are not saved by the bible are we…we are saved by believing that Jesus died for our sins and conquered death for us in the resurrection” It is true that Jesus conquered death, and that those who rightly believe this can be saved, even if they are illiterate and have never read or heard of the bible. But the reason they believe is because the word of God has been preserved in the sacred writings.

The bible is a sufficient warning for all to repent and believe the gospel. No one can say, “give me a sign and I will believe”. Everyone already has a sign in the sacred writings that come from the apostles and prophets whose tongues were the pen of a ready scribe. And if they don’t, you can give them that holy and spiritual sign…the bible.

And if they still don’t believe, don’t be discouraged. There is another account in the gospels about a man named Lazarus, a friend of Jesus, who died and Jesus raised him from the dead. And many people were amazed and confirmed in the fact that Jesus was the Christ because of it. But when the Chief priests heard of it, they did not repent. When they heard that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead they did not say “now we believe”…rather they said, “This is getting out of hand. Now people will follow Jesus, it will cause a disruption in the system and the Romans will take away our rule.” So instead of repenting, they resolved to kill Lazarus who had come to them from the dead. And instead of believing Jesus…they plotted to kill him.

But Jesus went willingly to the cross and died for their sins, and ours and the sins of the whole world. And he was raised on the third day, and gives eternal life to all who believe this. Thank God that you have the bible, which is your only reliable and sufficient source to the saving truth of Jesus Christ. I may preach the word of Christ, but it is not the word of Christ because I preach it. But the scriptures are the word of God, because God sent them. They are the words of Christ, who is the only way to the Father, beside Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, all the saints of the church who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb.