

**Worship Service: Sunday March 26, 2017**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent**

**Theme: "Jesus calls us to see the plight of others and act in Mercy"**

**WE GATHER IN WORSHIP**

\*Gathering Song: "Come Let Us Worship And Bow Down"

Come let us worship and bow down  
Let us kneel before the Lord  
Our God our Maker  
Come let us worship and bow down  
Let us kneel before the Lord  
Our God our Maker  
For He is our God  
And we are the people of His pasture  
And the sheep of His hand  
Just the sheep of His hand

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\*Call to Worship:

Jesus calls us to journey, this and every day,  
following him wherever he leads us.

**Jesus calls us to journey:  
to the place where we see the poor and the hungry,  
to become his disciples.**

Jesus calls us to worship together,  
to tell future generations the good news.

**Jesus invites us to a way of celebration,  
meeting and feasting with the humble and poor.  
Let us walk his way with joy.**

Jesus points us to a way of self-giving,  
where power and status are overturned.

**Jesus calls us to follow the way of the cross,  
where despair is transformed  
by the promise of new life.**

Jesus calls us to journey with him.  
**Let us worship God, who walks with us,  
this and every day.**

\*Song: "Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song" BoP#665

\*God's Greeting (from 2 Corinthians 13:14)

*(Our Lord has called us to worship and now greets us.)*

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.  
**And also with you.**

*(As God has greeted us with his peace,  
so let us pass the peace of Christ to each other.)*

\*The Sharing of the Peace (We greet each other saying, "**The Peace of Christ be with you.**")

### **WE ARE RENEWED IN GOD'S GRACE**

Solo: "Nobody Cared" Debbie Lamb

A Time of Quiet Confession, concluded with:

God of glory,  
you sent Jesus among us as the light of the world,  
to reveal your love for all people.

**We confess that our sin and pride hide the brightness of your light.  
We turn away from the poor;  
we ignore cries for justice;  
we do not strive for peace.**

**Forgive us, God. In your mercy, cleanse us of our sin,  
and baptize us once again with your Spirit,  
so that, as forgiven and renewed people,  
we may reflect the love and life of Jesus Christ  
into our world.**

Assurance of God's Pardon from John 3:16-17:

“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,  
so that everyone who believes in him  
may not perish but may have eternal life.  
Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world  
to condemn the world,  
but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

Song: “I’m Forever Grateful”

You did not wait for me  
To draw near to You  
But You clothed Yourself  
With frail humanity  
You did not wait for me  
To cry out to You  
But You let me hear  
Your voice calling me

And I'm forever grateful to You  
I'm forever grateful  
For the cross  
I'm forever grateful to You  
That You came  
To seek and save the lost

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The Lenten Insert

Song of Dedication: “Lord, Whose Love” BoP#722 v. 1-3

Youth message: “Crumbs from the Table”

Youth Song: “The Love Round”

Love, love, love, love,  
Christians this is your call:

Love our neighbors as ourselves  
For God loves us all.

### **GOD SPEAKS TO US FROM HIS WORD**

Prayer for Understanding

The Reading of Scripture:

Psalm 41  
Luke 16: 19-31

The Word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God!**

Sermon: "Reach out in Mercy"

This week as we follow Jesus on his journey toward the cross we see him engaged in a tense conversation with the Pharisees and with his disciples watching. Jesus has been teaching about materialism and money -- the unjust steward, serving Mammon, and stewardship.

The Pharisees loved money and did not like Jesus' attack on those who loved money in expense of loving people. Jesus tells a parable in which he condemns the Pharisees for their love of money and neglect of showing compassion for the poor (16:19-31).

In this Parable Jesus tells a story involving three main characters: A rich man, Lazarus and Abraham.

#### **Profile of the Rich Man (16:19-20)**

***"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores"* (16:19-20)**

First, Jesus paints a quick portrait of the rich man, a very, very rich man. Purple dye was extremely expensive, obtained from the

shellfish murex. A purple wool mantle was costly. A finely-woven linen tunic was considered the height of luxury.

Jesus mentions the gate to the rich man's mansion, Greek **pulon**, "gateway, entrance, gate," especially of the large, impressive gateways at the entrance of temples and places." [4] The rich man doesn't need to work so he feasts like this every day. Jesus pictures a rich man living opulently. The rich man is not named, though he is sometimes called Dives, the Latin word for "rich man."

### **Profile of the Poor Man (16:20-21)**

**"At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores." (16:20-21)**

Jesus contrasts the rich man with a beggar, the poorest of the poor. The beggar's name is Lazarus, the only character in any of Jesus' parables who is given a name. Lazarus is short for **Eleazar**, which means "**He (whom) God helps**," perhaps hinting at the man's piety. He is lying at a suitable place for begging, next to the rich man's gate, probably placed there by friends. He is sick, as evidenced by his numerous ulcerated sores. And he is hungry, longing to eat the scraps from the rich man's table, usually reserved for the dogs.

Jeremias informs us, "We are not to think of 'that which fell from the rich man's table' as 'crumbs,' but as pieces of bread which the guests dipped in the dish, wiped their hands with, and then threw under the table." [5]

The dogs that lick his sores are not pets, they are wild, street dogs that scavenge the garbage, and then nose around the poor man's sores. It is not a picture of comfort but of abject misery.

### **Abraham's Bosom (16:22)**

**"The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried." (16:22)**

Jesus pictures angels carrying Lazarus to Abraham. NIV "side" and KJV "bosom" is Greek *kolpos*, "bosom, breast, chest." The ancient banqueting practice of reclining at the table would have one's head

on someone's breast. So this puts Lazarus in the place of honor at the right hand of Abraham at the banquet in the next world.[6] The poor man's fortunes are reversed.

Lazarus is in paradise and the rich man is in torment.

Of course, Jesus is saying that riches don't count for anything after we die, but that isn't the thrust of this parable. I think he is making two points.

1. Wealth without active mercy for the poor is great wickedness.
2. If we close our eyes to the truth we are given, then we are doomed.

## WHAT IS MERCY?

1. compassionate or kindly forbearance shown toward an offender, an enemy, or other person in one's power; compassion, pity, or benevolence:

*Have mercy on the poor sinner.*

2. the disposition to be compassionate or forbearing:  
*an adversary wholly without mercy.*

What is mercy? Theologians have described mercy this way:

"God's mercy is his tender-hearted, loving compassion for his people. It is his tenderness of heart toward the needy. If grace contemplates humans as sinful, guilty, and condemned, mercy sees them as miserable and needy." – Millard Erickson<sup>2</sup>

"This is the first work of God—that He is merciful to all who are ready to do without their own opinion, right, wisdom, and all spiritual goods, and willing to be poor in spirit." – Martin Luther<sup>3</sup>



"God is pleased to show mercy to his enemies, according to his own sovereign pleasure. Though he is infinitely above all, and stands in no need of creatures; yet he is graciously pleased to take a merciful notice of poor worms in the dust." – Jonathan Edwards<sup>4</sup>

"Mercy is kindness exercised toward the miserable, and includes pity, compassion, forbearance, and gentleness, which the Scriptures so abundantly ascribe to God." – Charles Hodge<sup>5</sup>

There is nothing wrong with being rich but we have to realise that with riches comes responsibilities.

***In Africa, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is most often associated with efforts to combat malaria and polio. These have indeed been important priorities for us over the past 15 years. But our work in Africa is much more far-reaching, addressing a multitude of challenges in the areas of health, agriculture, and financial services for the poor.***

William Barclay titles this passage, "The Punishment of the Man Who Never Noticed." Lazarus was at his door and he didn't notice. Who is at our door that we don't notice?

- Needy illegal aliens who avoid the social welfare system for fear of being deported?
- Divorced moms with kids who are living below the poverty level but are too proud to ask for help?
- Families where the breadwinner is sick or shiftless or missing?
- The poor in third world countries who are out of sight and out of mind?

Christ calls us to realise that those who are on the margins in life must be helped by those who are able to and sometimes the help must come from those who can most afford to. Amen.

\*Song of Response: "Help us to Help Each Other Lord" BoP # 489

Prayers of God's People, concluding with the Lord's Prayer

**WE BRING OUR GIFTS**

Work and Witness of our Church

A Time of Giving

\*Sung Response: "**Praise God, from Whom all Blessings Flow**" BoP#79

**WE GO OUT TO SERVE AS THE HANDS AND FEET OF CHRIST**

\*Benediction

\*Closing Song: "Lord, Whose Love" BoP#722 v. 4