

Trinity One (2020)

(1 St. John 4:7-21, St. Luke 16:19-31)

“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died and was buried.”

The parable of our Lord recorded for us in this morning’s Gospel Lesson teaches us at least two important “eschatological” (“end of life”) points:

First, when men die they go to either Paradise (in the parable called “*Abraham’s bosom*”) or Sheol (called “*this place of torment*”).

Second, when we die our eternal destiny is set. Between Paradise and Sheol there is “*a great gulf fixed*.” No one passes out of Sheol to Paradise, or from Paradise to Sheol.

Many today find these facts startling, and some say they are untrue.

They do not believe there is a Paradise and a Sheol (which after the Day of Judgment transfer their occupants to Heaven and to Hell).

Throughout Scripture though we are definitely taught there *is* a heaven and there *is* a hell, and that each of us will end up in one or the other eternally.

This leads to the second form of unbelief.

Some, and I’m talking about Christians here too, believe while there may be a Paradise (heaven) and a Sheol (hell), they are not *forever* fixed. At the Judgment or some time afterwards all souls will be “saved” in some way.

Both of these errors are forms of “Universalism,” the belief that ultimately all will eventually be “saved.”

God will give us all an eternal “mulligan” and wipe everyone’s slate clean.

All will be saved in their “own way.”

All forms of Universalism are false and very dangerous to the lives and souls of those who believe them. No matter the motive, it is never good for a Christian to believe anything that plainly contradicts Scripture.

In order to better grasp the danger of the false belief of Universalism, let us take a moment to think of the price that has been paid for sins.

The eternal, sinless, Only-begotten Son of God was incarnate of the Blessed Virgin Mary and became Man; the Second Adam, for *one* specific purpose. 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us why:

“For (The Father) hath made (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we may be made the righteousness of God in him (in Christ).”

The Father sent His Son, the Second Person of the Eternal, Holy Trinity, into this world; a world which He created perfect but we (all mankind) have polluted with sin, in order to *be* the perfect sacrifice to atone for all sin.

1 Peter 2:24 states that Jesus Christ by “... *his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, ...by whose stripes ye were healed.*”

Jesus came to earth as Man to be the sin bearer; the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

He paid the price, the full price, by Himself, for the sins of the world.

As the St. Augustine Prayer Book states it in the Holy Hour I prayer office: “*Every sin...Ever committed...By anyone...From the beginning of the world until its end...All descending upon this one Person...*”

That is the price Jesus paid for our sins.

How dismissive does one have to be to think the Father can merely “overlook” those who do not, by faith, receive (who reject) the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus upon the cross of Calvary as the propitiation for their sins?

How can God just give them salvation? Doing so would be unjust.

If we do not *have to* confess to the Father that we are sinners who deserve a place with the “rich man” in the “*place of torment*”...

If we do not *have to* believe upon Jesus Christ by faith and plead His sacrifice as the propitiation for our sins, then Jesus died in vain.

But Jesus did not die in vain!

He *is* the *only* satisfaction for sin, and the only way anyone can be saved by Him is by receiving His sacrificial death for *their own* sins by faith!

In Acts 4 Sts. Peter and John are brought before the Sanhedrin for healing a man, and then preaching salvation only by and in Jesus Christ.

As they stood before that body they boldly told them it was by Jesus Christ alone that the man had been healed, and then added: “*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*”

Only in and by the Holy Name of Jesus Christ can we be healed and saved from our sin. No other Name under heaven has been given!

It is a theological fact, revealed without contradiction in Scripture, that faith in Jesus is the only means by which we can be saved. We must not fall into the trap of accepting the idea God is going to make “exceptions.”

True, God is God and can save anyone, anyway He wants. What *He* does with individuals, especially those who have truly never heard the name of Jesus Christ, is “His business.” Romans 2:11-16 addresses this mystery.

But for us, and for most of the world, there is only ONE *revealed* way by which men can be saved: by the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ received by faith.

Those who receive His sacrifice and believe upon Jesus will, like Lazarus in the parable, be in Paradise, the Bosom of Abraham, and one day Heaven.

Those who do not will be with the rich man in Sheol, the place of torment, and one day Hell.

God will not have to condemn them. They will have already condemned themselves. In St. John 3:18 Scripture says: “...*he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* We are responsible for our own eternal destiny.

This morning’s Gospel teaches that Heaven and Hell are real places.

Every man and every woman will one day go to one or the other.

How the Father determines where each of us goes is based on what we receive and believe about Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross, and then what we do with that belief with our lives here, today, while we are on this earth. There will be *no* second chance!

Either we believe upon Jesus Christ by grace, through faith unto the good works of love, which St. John describes in the Epistle Lesson, or we do not.

If we do, and continue to, we *will* be with “Lazarus” in Paradise for a season, and then in Heaven forever.

If we do not, or we lose our faith and surrender the grace and salvation we’ve been given, we *will* be with the “rich man” in Sheol, the “*place of torment*” for a season, and then in Hell forever.

Brethren, the truth is there is only one way to be saved, and that is by and in Jesus Christ; The Way, the Truth and the Life...

Sacred Scripture reveals no other way, and so as faithful Christians we must not believe there may be another way. ***In the Name...Amen.***