

INTERESTING SERMON

Rev. Titus Lang Delivered Sermon on Rich Man and Lazarus, Sunday, June 20

By request of several readers of The Herald, we are publishing a synopsis of the sermon delivered on June 20, at Immanuel's Lutheran church by the pastor, Rev. Titus Lang. The sermon was on Luke 16, 19-31, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, entitled "Hell and Heaven, the eternal destinies of Man—Only Two Places, Hell and Heaven."

Mr. Lang said: A great and important truth is brought home to us in the gospel lesson, Luke 16, 19-31. The Lord here relates a parable or rather gives a description of two men, the rich man

and poor Lazarus, of their life here on earth and their destinies beyond this life. We learn from this lesson that as there are only two ways, either of which every person must travel here on earth, the broad way of destruction and the narrow way of life, so there are only two destinations to which this life leads, namely heaven and hell. When his hour has come, and his time here on earth is completed, every person must leave this world and die. The rich man and the poor alike must pass away. There is no escape from death for anyone. "With equal face impartial fate knocks at the palace as the cottage gate." And after death the souls of the departed pass either into heaven or into hell, to be blessed or to suffer in all eternity. That is what the Bible, the word of God, teaches. There is no third place. Neither can we evade either of these two places. It is useless for us to do away with hell, as some have tried to do, and it is vain for us to seek heaven here on earth in the so-called millenium, or a thousand years of joy and happiness in this world, which some have invented. In spite of these inventions of human reason, the fact remains according to the word of God, that hell and heaven are the two eternal destinations, into either of which all human creatures must enter after this life, and for our benefit, to warn us and to comfort us these two places are described in the gospel lesson before us.

What Kind of a Place Is Hell?

We read in our text that the rich man, who clothed himself in purple and fine linen and lived sumptuously every day of his life here on earth, who finally died and was buried, was found in hell after his death (v. 23). From this we learn that hell cannot be found here on earth. Neither is hell the grave, where the bodies of those departed from this life are laid to rest. For the body in the grave is dead, but here we find the rich man after his death alive in hell. Hell is therefore a place beyond this life, beyond the grave. And furthermore, we learn that hell is a place of intense and infernal sufferings. The rich man "in hell lifted up his eyes being in torment" (v. 23). He was tormented by a flame of fire (v. 24), and to add to his sufferings he was permitted to behold from afar the bliss and happiness of poor Lazarus, a saint in heaven (v. 23), but at the same time he learned that there was a deep gulf fixed between heaven and hell, so that no one could pass from one place to the other, and that therefore there was for him no hope of release, no end of his infernal sufferings in sight. Oh, behold, what a terrible place hell is. A place where they who there abide suffer intense and indelible pain in a pool of fire, "where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched and they are an abhorrence to all flesh" (Is. 66-24), where they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the lamb, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth from everlasting to everlasting and they have no rest day and night." (Rev. 14, 11-12.)

In this infernal place of suffering we find the rich man. And why? Not because God wished him to be there. God wishes to condemn no man to hell, he has not prepared hell for man, but only for the devil and his angels. Not because he was rich, for not wealth in itself, only the

coveting after riches and the abuse of wealth is a sin in the sight of God. What brought this rich man to hell was not so much his outward appearance as moreover the deplorable condition of his soul. He did not consider his own sinful condition. He did not believe in and did not seek his true God and saviour. He lived only for this world and did not prepare nor provide himself for eternity. He lacked the true love toward God and toward his neighbor, which springs only from faith in Christ Jesus, and which alone makes a man truly happy. He was an unbelieving, indifferent, easygoing man of the world. And this his unbelief and consequent lack of love toward God and his neighbor was the great sin, for which he had to suffer in hell. This hell is a place prepared for the devil and his angels where they are found, who in this life follow the devil in unbelief and sin, forsaking their God, his word, his love, and neglecting the poor and needy. All these will find out that as they forsake God here on earth he will also forsake them in hell, for he says, "Whosoever believeth not shall be damned." (Mc. 16, 16.)

Salvation from Hell

But is there no salvation from hell? Certainly there is. And this salvation is now at hand. The rich man in hell realized this (v. 27-28). He was worried about his five brethren. But Abraham told him: "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." Thus we are saved from hell by Moses and the prophets, by the word of God, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, in which God for Jesus sake promises forgiveness of sins, life and salvation to every sinner and which he causes freely to be preached on earth. Would you then be saved from hell, then come and hear this word and accept it in true faith. Believe it, that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that all who believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Accept this word in true faith and you will escape the torments of hell to enjoy the blessings of heaven which are also described in our text.

Heaven and Its Blessings

Near the gate of the rich man's palace there lay, according to our text, a certain beggar, named Lazarus, a poor miserable creature. He had no home, no food, no clothes. He desired to be fed of the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, but we are not told that he always received them. Besides he was sick. His body was covered with sores. Yet in his misery he received no medical attention. He had no bed upon which to rest, no friends except the rich man's dogs, which came and licked his sores, thus bringing him some relief. Finally he died. Nothing is said of his burial. A hole was probably dug somewhere and his body tumbled in. A beggar's grave received it.

But of this beggar we read that upon his death he, namely his soul, was "carried by angels into the bosom of Abraham" (v. 22), that is, to heaven. Now what kind of a place is heaven? It is certainly no place here on earth, not a place of misery, pain and death such as Lazarus experienced here on earth. Heaven is a place beyond this life, the dwelling place of angels and of saints, the garden of Eden, the bosom of Abraham, where Lazarus and they that are like him enter in the hour of death according to the soul, and finally upon the resurrection on the last day according to the body also, to live in unspeakable comfort and happiness, in blissful serenity and peace undisturbed in the presence of God and their saviour in all eternity. (Rev. 14, 13.)

But who will go to heaven? We learn that Lazarus, the poor and diseased beggar, went to heaven. And he entered this place not because of his poverty and sickness, for poverty and sickness are the consequences of sin, and rather point to death and damnation. Lazarus was by nature a sinner and no better than any other human being here on earth. But Lazarus repented of his sins and believed, trusted in the fact that God had forgiven him his sins, as his name, "Lazarus", meaning "help of God", implies. Thus they with Lazarus go to heaven who repent of their sins and believe that by God's grace for Jesus sake their sins are forgiven, as Jesus says, Mk. 16, 16: "Whosoever believeth and is baptized shall be saved." And to these blessings of heaven we are lead only in one way, namely by "Moses and the prophets", by the word of God, the law and the gospel, as revealed to us in the Bible. Would you therefore wish to go to heaven, then come and hear and learn and study the word of God, learn to believe according to this word on Jesus, your saviour, and his atonement made for you, for the Scripture says: "Believe on Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thine house."

METCALFE'S PAPER—

THE OMAHA NEBRASKAN

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