

# Sunday's Sermon

## GLORIA DEI LUTHERAN CHURCH

250 Fox Hill Road ■ Hampton, Virginia 23669

September 25, 2022

The Reverend David E. Fox

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Year C) 2022

Luke 16.19-31

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Join me in singing and moving to Head Shoulders Knees and Toes. For those who struggle with hitting the low spots, just stay up in the head and shoulder areas of the song, but please, please oblige me.

Head – Shoulders – Knees and Toes – Knees and Toes. Head – Shoulders – Knees and Toes – Knees and Toes. Eyes – and Ears – and Mouth – and Nose. Head – Shoulders – Knees and Toes – Knees and Toes. (*have them to sit*)

This is a favorite childhood song of mine because of its words and its movement.

In our Gospel reading for today, we have the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man wears fine purple linens, and Lazarus wears sores. The rich man ate a feast every day, and Lazarus ate only when the rich man tossed him a crumb to taste. The rich man reclined at his supper table, and Lazarus weakly laid at the gate.

In this story, the rich man is not given a name, but the beggar has a name – Lazarus – that literally means “God helps.” There was an earthly gap that could have been bridged if the rich man would have shared his blessings<sup>i</sup>.

In this parable, the dogs gave more attention to Lazarus than did the rich man. The dogs shared the grease-covered bread so he could eat. The dogs tended to his sores by licking them. The rich man paid no attention to the situation just outside of his window. This was the life the two lived for some time, and we are told that Lazarus is carried away by the angels and that the rich man is buried. Then we hear that Lazarus is brought to Abraham’s bosom and the rich man has found himself in Hades. And now there is an eternal chasm that can never be crossed<sup>ii</sup>.

What I want to bring to your attention here is that the rich man, while in Hades, calls out to Abraham as Father Abraham. He is saying the words. He is a descendent of Abraham who served the God who blessed him. But for all of the rich man’s life, he did not live as if he were part of the family who was blessed and loved by God. Here the rich man is singing a song without any of the movements.

He’s singing with no movement: Head – Shoulders – Knees and Toes. Head –Shoulders – Knees and Toes. But his life is not matching up with what is coming out of his mouth.

The rich man is not condemned for being rich, rather he is being condemned for his indifference and uncaring attitude towards poor Lazarus, who found himself right outside of the man’s gate<sup>iii</sup>.

Abraham was wealthy, and he is with Lazarus. Abraham's actions matched his song. This rich man's actions did not.

We often want to point at the rich man and say, "I'm glad I'm not him." But brothers and sisters, many of us are. One doesn't have to be rich to be greedy and selfish and uncaring. As Children of God, we have been given the Kingdom so that we can give it away; but we're holding on to it as if there is not enough to go around.

We are praying to a forgiving God, "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us;" and yet we can't forgive someone for something that happened ten plus years ago.

We are reading scripture of a God who calls us to welcome the stranger and yet we say, "They might be a thug or a terrorist;" to feed the hungry and yet we think, "Welfare can keep them;" to visit the imprisoned, we know "We sure aren't going to those places with those people."

We sing songs that proclaim that our God is a generous God and yet we hold on to our money as tight as we can, because it is our money. And there we are, just like the rich man, nameless, unlike that of Lazarus – God helps, because we believe that we don't need God's help.

We've started to believe, "I'm blessed, because I did it on my own and everyone else is in the places they are in because of their own choices." And in so doing, we are creating a chasm that could be closed if our actions matched our prayers, our Scripture, and our songs.

We are singing, but our actions are just not matching up with the words. Our hands are in our pockets, ensuring that no one can reach in and take what we have and we sing with no movement to match: Head – Shoulders – Knees and Toes. Head – Shoulders – Knees and Toes.

Folks, it is time for our actions to reflect our words. Because our words and thoughts seem to get in the way of Jesus who is working in this world to bridge the chasms, in which we have created. God has blessed us with the Kingdom, and we are not giving it away as we are called to do.

We say that we are Children of God. We declare, "God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." We callout, "God is forgiving, loving, and generous." We say it, but it's time to quit talking and start living life that really is life. It's time to put our words, our faith, ourselves into action. Because actions – actions speak louder than words.

Our actions are our prayer. Our actions are the words of our Scripture. Our actions are the notes to our song. Christ is calling us to be a people who preach the gospel at all times and use words if necessary.

You can share the gospel with people by swinging a hammer. You can share the gospel by teaching a child to knit, or fish, or read. You can share the gospel by sitting with someone who is lonely.

People of Gloria Dei, the best prayer, the finest word we can give someone, the greatest sermon ever delivered never uttered a sound.

*(Motions only)* Head – Shoulders – Knees and Toes. Head – Shoulders – Knees and Toes. Eyes and Ears and Mouth and Nose. Head Shoulders Knees and Toes – Knees and Toes.

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<sup>i</sup> Stofferger, Brian. <https://crossmarks.com/brian/luke16x19.htm>. 09/21/2022

<sup>ii</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid.*