

Sermon Notes on Mt. 16:24-27, Trinity I

1. Vs. 24 says "anyone." Vs. 25 says "whoever." Vs. 27 says "to each one." Jesus is talking about all people. "Anyone" and "whoever" imply the universal atonement. All have been saved and are eligible. Furthermore, all, without exception, will be judged.
2. "To come after Jesus" means to be a Christian, a believer in Christ. That requires three things: a) Denying oneself; b) Taking up one's cross; c) Following Jesus. To deny oneself means to turn one's back on self as Peter denied Christ. The Christian says to his sinful self: "I want nothing to do with you." To take up one's cross means to bear patiently whatever Jesus lays on a person: sickness, loss of goods or name, affliction etc. To follow Jesus simply means to trust Him, keep on denying oneself and keep on bearing the cross. The cross of the Christian is not the same as Jesus' cross. He bore the sins of the world. Only He could do that. The Christian's cross means suffering simply because he is a Christian.
3. Vs. 25 means: "He who wants to preserve his natural life, in which he yields to his natural desires, will lose his soul. But whoever mortifies the sinful self for Jesus' sake will rescue his soul." This is a great paradox. The world saves its life but loses its soul. God's children lose their life but save their souls.
4. To deny oneself means to crucify the sinful flesh with its affections and lusts as Paul says at Gal. 5:24.
5. To come after Jesus means to believe that He has done everything necessary for salvation forever. Self denial and cross bearing lie in the area of sanctification, that which is required in the life of a believer.
6. On the last day Jesus will repay every human being according to his works. That is a principle of both Testaments. Cf. Ps. 62:13 and Prov. 24:12. That does not mean that people will be saved by what they have done. When people become Christians they become spiritually alive. They are dead to sin and alive to God. The new man in them follows the Lord. The new man denies itself, takes up its cross and follows the Lord. As Luther said: "Faith alone justifies but faith is never alone." Faith without works is dead. Jesus said at Jn. 15:6 "If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown out like the branch and withered and men gather them and throw them into the fire and they are burned."
7. Vs. 26 denotes an utter impossibility. No man can gain the whole world. But even if he could, it would not be enough to gain his own soul. On the verbs "to gain" and "to lose" read Philipians 3:7-11. Paul considered all things a loss because he gained Jesus. He considered all worldly things dung, manure, when he found the righteousness of Christ by faith. When Job lost everything he said: "The Lord has given and the Lord has taken. Blessed be the name of the Lord." And later he said: "I know that my Redeemer lives."
8. Read the parable of the rich man, Lk. 12:16-21. He said to his soul: "Soul, you have many good things laid up for many years. Eat, drink, and have a good time." But, that night he died. He lost his soul. Read the parable at Lk. 16:19-31. The rich man was not lost because he was rich. The poor man was saved not because he was poor. The rich man lived only for this life. The poor man was evidently a believer in Jesus. Abraham, Job and Joseph of Arimathea were wealthy but they were children of God. Jesus said: "Where your treasure is, there will also your heart be." Mt. 6:21.
9. To deny oneself does not mean that sex, money and other things of this life are sinful. Col. 3:2 says "Keep on thinking about things above, not about the things on the earth." A Christian thinks about things above by the proper use of things on this earth. He lives his life by his faith in the Son of God Who loved him and gave Himself for him." Gal. 2:20. There are two "I" in every Christian: the crucified, sinful "I" and the believing, redeemed "I".

## Sermon Outline on Mt. 16:24-27, Trinity I

Theme: THE GREAT PARADOX: GAINING-LOSING; LOSING-GAINING

Introduction: Is. 55:9 says: "My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts are higher than your thoughts." Paul says at I Cor. 2:13: "We speak not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches." Jesus says that unless we become as little children we cannot enter the kingdom of God. We must believe what His Word says and live by that. He explains the paradox of our text.

### I-GAINING LEADS TO LOSING

A-What gaining means here. In vs. 21-23, just prior to our text, Jesus predicted His suffering, death and resurrection. Though Peter meant well, he tried to dissuade Jesus from this course. He wanted to preserve Jesus' life. Jesus said: "Get behind me, Satan. You are an offense to Me. Because you are not thinking the things of God but the things of men." Peter's idea of gaining would have meant losing everything. In vs. 24 Jesus says: "If anyone wishes to come after Me let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow after Me." If a man wants to be a Christian without denying his sinful flesh and without bearing the cross which Jesus lays on him, he is trying to save his soul but will lose his life forever. At Rom. 6:2 Paul asks: "Shall we who have died to sin still live in it?" Of course not! Baptism causes us to die to sin and live to God, forgiven and renewed by faith in Jesus. In vs. 26 of our text Jesus asks: "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" The answer is: "Nothing!" All the world's money, goods and fame cannot redeem one soul.

B-What losing means here. Vs. 27 is a warning to people who are not fruitful Christians. Works are not the cause of salvation but only the fruit and proof of saving faith. But if there are no works, then there is no faith either. James says: "Faith without works is dead." In the parable of Mt. 25:31-46 Jesus pictures the lost as those who <sup>Bu</sup> did not produce fruits of faith. In Philippians 3:7-11, tells us that the works, merits and righteousness of sinful man are only dung, manure. If that's all a man has, he will be lost.

### II-LOSING LEADS TO GAINING

A-What losing means here. The words "for My sake" in vs. 25 are very important. People who lose their soul for Jesus' sake will save their life forever. Who are such people? They are the ones who come after Jesus. That means that they confess their sins and believe <sup>it</sup> the Gospel which forgives their sins. They hear the Word of God and keep it. They hear the Gospel which is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes. Such people deny themselves, take up their cross and follow after Jesus. Such people are alive to God. They refuse to live in sin. They say "nyet" to the devil, the world and the flesh. They sin, but not wilfully. They are tempted but they do not yield to temptation. But if they DO sin they flee to the arms of the forgiving Jesus. Such people take up their cross. There is no punishment for Christians. Sickness, trouble, affliction come to Christians too but they proceed only from God's love. Hebr. 12:6. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22. That's what Jesus means by losing one's soul for His sake.

B-What gaining means here. What will the believing, self-denying, cross-bearing Christian find when he dies? Read Mt. 25:31-46 again. Jesus will see his many deeds of love which prove his faith and He will say: "Come you blessed of My Father, enter into My kingdom." What will he gain? Read Lk. 16:22. Like the poor man he will be carried to Abraham's bosom. Vs. 25 says that he is now comforted. Jesus says: "Those who have done good will go forth to the resurrection of life." Jn. 5:29.

Sermon Notes on Lk. 16:19-31, Trinity I

1. This parable is the last in a remarkable sequence of parables in Luke: 1) 14:7-24, Jesus speaks three parables to host and fellow-guests to bring them to repentance; 2) 14:25-35, Jesus speaks to the crowds about the necessity of having the proper resources for Christian living; 3) 15:1-32, the three parables picturing repentance and conversion; 4) 16:1-13, Jesus addresses His disciples on the proper use of Mammon; 5) 16:19-31, a parable warning the Pharisees who impenitently disregarded the true message of Moses and the prophets.
2. This parable does not teach that riches and wealth of themselves are evil and lead people to hell. It is the love of money, not money itself which is evil. Nor does this parable say that poverty, misery and woe of themselves lead to everlasting life. Read Lk. 6:20-26. It draws a comparison between the repentant, suffering believer and the arrogant, selfish, impenitent unbeliever.
3. In the vss. preceding our parable, Lk. 16:14-18, we find the wealthy, money-loving Pharisees despising Jesus. Their self-justification was an abomination to God. Furthermore, they treated marriage lightly. They lived in sins against the sixth commandment. The Pharisees refused to listen to Jesus and to repent.
4. In vss. 29 and 31 Jesus makes the point of the parable very clear: "They have Moses and the prophets. Let them (the rich man's brothers) hear them. . . If they don't listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded even if someone would rise from the dead." Jesus once said to His enemies: "If you would believe Moses, you would believe in Me because he wrote about Me. But if you don't believe his writings how will you believe My sayings?" Jn. 5:46-47. The central message of Moses and the Prophets was the Messiah Who was to come. See Jn. 5:39; Acts 10:43; II Tim. 3:15; Lk. 24:27. The Pharisees refused to believe this. They remained impenitent and hateful toward Jesus. They claimed Abraham as father. Jn. 8:39. But Jesus told them that the devil was their father. Jn. 8:44.
5. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The parable at Lk. 16:19-31 pictures the spiritual difference between believers and unbelievers in this life and in the life to come. Like Lazarus in this life believers in Jesus are beggars. They confess that they cannot save themselves. Very often they are despised by the rich and famous. They suffer for Jesus' sake. On the other hand, the unbelievers who live only for this life spend their money on themselves and have no time to do good to others. In the life to come we find the opposite. The unbelievers are punished eternally because they would not listen to the Lord. Even in hell they still have not learned their lesson. But the believers are comforted forever. They lie in the bosom of the father of believers, Abraham. Rom. 4:11-12. Read Lk. 6:20-26 again. The poor are the repentant, believing sinners. The rich are the impenitent, unbelieving sinners. Jesus is calling us to repent of our sins and to believe in Him Who took the sins of the world away.
6. Vs. 20 of our text is the only instance in the parables of Jesus in which a name is given to someone. "Lazarus" means "he whom God helps." Lk. 10:20 tells us that we should rejoice because our names are written in heaven. Perhaps that is why Jesus gives Lazarus his name in our text.
7. This parable does not teach that riches damn and poverty saves, nor does it teach that peoples' bodies go immediately to heaven or hell nor does it teach that people in heaven and hell talk to each other. It simply describes the difference between believers and unbelievers in this life and in the life to come. Read Lk. 6:20-26 once more.
8. Mt. 6: 2 and 5 tell us Jesus said: "Truly I tell you, they have their reward." In this life God rewards the unbelievers but it ends with death. Read Jn. 11:45-54. The raising of the historical Lazarus only deepened and hardened the unbelief of unbelievers. Cf. vs. 31, .

Sermon Outline on Lk. 16:19-31, Trinity I

Theme: THE ROLES REVERSED

Introduction: Vs. 25 of our text reads: "And Abraham said, son, remember that in your life you received your good things and Lazarus likewise received evil things. But now he is comforted here and you are tormented." The roles of believers and unbelievers will be reversed in the life to come. We must take care to see what this does NOT mean and what it DOES mean.

I-WHAT THIS DOES NOT MEAN

*Leads* A-It does not mean that wealth damns. In the OT Abraham and Job, David and Solomon, were wealthy. It did not damn them. In the NT Joseph of Arimathea was wealthy. He was a Christian. It's the love of money (I Tim. 6:9-10) which <sup>leads</sup> people to damnation. Their love for money is a sign of their unbelief. Lk. 6:24-26 condemns the wealthy who live only to themselves and have no money to spend on the needy. In our text the rich man dressed beautifully, had a good time, and did not help Lazarus who lay at his door. This shows his lack of godliness, his lack of faith in Jesus, his lack of repentance. The wealthy Christians of the OT and NT confessed their sins and believed in the Redeemer.

B-It does not mean that poverty saves. Read Lk. 6:20-22. It does not say that the poor are saved because they are poor. Our text does not say that Lazarus was saved because he was poor. Mt. 5:3-11 is a good commentary on this. Jesus is speaking about the poor in spirit, the spiritually poor, not the physically poor. In our text the rich man is the main character. From Lk. 16:14-18 we know that Jesus spoke this parable to the Pharisees who are pictured in the rich man of our text. Lazarus is a foil to the rich man. The Pharisees were loveless. They did not care about the poor. In our text Lazarus shows how the loveless Pharisees treated the poor. The Pharisees had no good works.

II-WHAT THIS DOES MEAN

A-It does mean that people like the rich man will suffer in hell. Read vss. 14-18 again. There the Pharisees are described. They were lovers of money. They despised the Word of Jesus. They justified themselves before men. That means that they called their evil works good. But they were an abomination in God's sight. They despised the Law of God which forbids a man to divorce his wife for an unScriptural reason. In other words they were dead in their trespasses and sins. They were self-deceived unbelievers. Read vss. 29-31 of our text. The Pharisees refused to listen to Moses and the Prophets, the Word of God. The Word of God tells us to repent of our sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Pharisees refused to do this. Jesus was telling them that their good life was leading them to hell.

B-It does mean that people like Lazarus will be saved. Very little is said about Lazarus in this life. He was a beggar. He was always hungry. He had many sores which the dogs licked. He lay at the rich man's door but received not even crumbs from the rich man. Whom does he represent? Read Mt. 5:3-12. He was poor in spirit. He claimed no good works whereby to justify himself in God's sight. But heaven was his. He lived a life of grief but he knew that comfort would be his. He was meek. He hungered for righteousness and knew he would be filled. He was merciful and knew that God would have mercy on him. He was clean in heart and knew that he would see God. He was a peacemaker and knew that he was a child of God. He was persecuted but rejoiced because his reward in heaven was great.

Conclusion: The roles of the rich man and poor Lazarus were reversed in the life to come. The unbeliever was damned. The believer was saved. Parables must always be interpreted according to the rest of the Bible. Let us confess our sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.