

I.N.R.I. *“O Lord, I have trusted in Your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation!”* David teaches us to sing when it seems that our enemies are triumphing over us. When all appears to be lost and hope gone - the Christian sings of God’s faithfulness and clings to His Word of promise. Abram was nearing his 90th birthday. His wife Sarai nearing 80 years old had passed childbearing years. All Abram could see was that his relative Eliezer would be the heir of his household. The Lord God brings Abram outside showing him the stars and promising that through his own son the promised Seed would be born. Abram would be the father of “thousands times thousands, ten thousands times ten thousands” of “every tribe, tongue, and nation.” Abram trusted in God’s Word - the promise of the Saving Seed. God the Holy Spirit teaches through St. Paul’s pen, *“The promises God spoke referred to Abraham and to his seed. It doesn’t say, “And to seeds,” as if it were referring to many, but, as referring to one, “And to your seed,” who is Christ.”* (Gal. 3:16). Walking by faith Abram treasured God’s Word - the Promise of Jesus - a Word that is worth more than all the world contains. Christians alone are the true children of Abraham - *“in the same way as Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness” 7 Understand, then, that those who believe are the children of Abraham.”* (Gal. 3:6-7)

Walking by Holy Spirit Gospel breathed crucifix focused faith - we have no fear - we live in hope. God’s perfect love for sinners in the nail scarred living hands of Christ Jesus cast out fear. In Jesus the Holy Spirit comforts us - judges us forgiven - assures us that we are citizens of heaven and need not fear death or judgment day. The Triune God has judged us to be His own in Holy Baptism. Written His name forever upon us and sealed it with the cross. His perfect love frees us to love our brother, our sister, our fellow human beings no matter what shade of brown their skin. The only true and living God speaks to poor miserable sinners like us, *“Do not be afraid, because I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine. When you cross through the waters, I will be with you. When you cross the rivers, they will not sweep you away. When you walk through fire, you will not be burned, and the flame will not set you on fire. Because I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior, “(Isa. 43:2-4)* To be known by name is to be saved. It is the difference between saying, *“There is a young man”* and *“That young man Tim is my son.”* For God to know and call you by name means that He is your Father and you are His true children. His Home is your Home. His riches are your inheritance incorruptible and undefiled never fading away, reserved in heaven for you.

Eliezer of Damascus would not be Abram’s heir - another Elazer

would. Jesus introduces us to him by name in today’s Gospel lesson. The name Eliezer means, *“God is my helper.”* Putting the name “Elazer” into Greek it comes out, “Lazarus.” “Lazarus” means *“One whom God helps.”* What help? (vs.19-21) Lazarus was **“Blest To Be A Beggar!”**

Whom do you think is favored by God - the rich man or the sore covered homeless beggar? Knowing the end of the parable we are quick to choose Lazarus, but is that how we live our lives? *“What does it mean to have a god?”* Dr. Luther asks in the Large Catechism:” 2] *Answer: A god means that from which we are to expect all good and to which we are to take refuge in all distress, so that to have a God is nothing else than to trust and believe Him from the [whole] heart; as I have often said that the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. 3] If your faith and trust be right, then is your god also true; and, on the other hand, if your trust be false and wrong, then you have not the true God; for these two belong together, faith and God. That now, I say, upon which you set your heart and put your trust is properly your god.”* What do you set your heart upon? What are you trusting?

If we are honest it is often money and numbers? The idol of materialism infects all nations and peoples. Dr. Luther in 1529 wrote, *“Many a one thinks that he has God and everything in abundance when he has money and, possessions; he trusts in them and boasts of them with such firmness and assurance as to care for no one. 6] Lo, such a man also has a god, Mammon by name, i.e., money and possessions, on which he sets all his heart, and which is also the most common idol on earth. 7] He who has money and possessions feels secure, and is joyful and undismayed as though he were sitting in the midst of Paradise. 8] On the other hand, he who has none doubts and is despondent, as though he knew of no God. 9] For very few are to be found who are of good cheer, and who neither mourn nor complain if they have not Mammon. This [care and desire for money] sticks and clings to our nature, even to the grave.”* Without knowing the rest of the story - who would you rather be - the rich man living in luxury secure in your own home, feasting on the finest foods, clothed in designer clothing, honored by the community as successful, and to all outward appearances favored by God. Or would you be content to be homeless, clothed with putrid sores, hunger gnawing as you waste away, wanting to eat garbage, abandoned by all, to all appearances forgotten by God, and cared for only by the stray dogs licking the puss from your wounds until they can devour your lifeless body. Our old adam doesn’t want to be a *“poor, miserable”* beggar - a sinner who brings nothing in our hands to God - clinging only to Christ’s cross for salvation.

We need to die. Death reveals the God to whom our heart clings. (vs.22) Lazarus, abandoned by the world - was never forgotten or abandoned by His Creator and Savior! Lazarus really was never alone - the Lord’s holy angels watched over him in his suffering - they were at his death bed on the street. When he breathed his last - they were his honor guard to carry

him safely home to Abraham's side - paradise - the true rest of God's Word and promise. Jesus doesn't say that his body was buried - most likely it was thrown in the trash - in the Valley of Gehenna outside of Jerusalem to become food for the wild dogs and vultures. No one had a place for him in their homes while he lived - they certainly were not going to open their tombs to him when he died. There is One who did have a Home for Lazarus - a room He had prepared for him in the Father's House from the foundation of the world. His name is Christ Jesus - He alone is our Treasure - His Word is our greatest riches.

The rich man also dies and is given a grand burial - most likely - honored in his local synagogue as one favored by God. Honored as successful and hailed as a great man by many. What the world cannot see is his fate - being buried out of the church and in the church cemetery doesn't mean that you are in heaven. (vs. 23) Who is your God? The rich man's god failed him. All of his friends abandoned him. He is alone. His comforts are gone. He is in torment. Looking up he sees father Abraham far off holding the poor miserable beggar close to his heart - as a loving father holds his beloved son.

Now in hell the rich man thinks of mercy. (vs.24) His words betray him, though he had ignored the beggar laying at his gate and wanting his table scraps - he knew Lazarus' name. Now he who showed no mercy in life, wants mercy in hell - just a drop of water - as Lazarus just wanted a crumb - now he wants a drop of water from the river of life. The sons of Korah confidently confess in the 49th Psalm: *"Why should I fear days of trouble, days when the wickedness of my pursuers surrounds me? 6 They trust in their wealth. They place their confidence in the abundance of their riches. 7 But no one can by any means redeem himself. He cannot give God a ransom for himself— 8 (Yes, the ransom for their souls is costly. Any payment would fall short.) 9 —so that he could live on forever and not see the pit."* Echoing Jesus' Word, *"36 After all, what good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul? 37 Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8)*

The rich man's idol cannot save him or provide any relief.(vs.25) He had his god - that to which he looked for all good and ran to in time of trouble - his idol of mammon failed him giving no relief. Note well that the rich man isn't in hell because he was rich, nor is Lazarus in heaven because he was poor. They are where they are at because of the God they clung to during their earthly pilgrimage. The god of mammon, popular with the world and our own sinful flesh - cannot save - it doesn't extend beyond the grave. (vs.26) Not even Abraham can cross the chasm between heaven and hell. This is the one prayer in all of New Testament to a saint in heaven - and it goes unanswered. There is only One Man who crossed

the chasm physically into hell - His Name is Jesus. He breached Satan's prison - only to preach His Victory over sin, Satan, death, and hell. This is the only water that quenches hell's fire by the water flowing from Christ's Jesus' crucified side to wash away all our sin, all our guilt, all our shame.

It is His Word alone that saves. The Word that God has preached from the beginning to sinful fallen lost men dead in their trespasses and sins. The Word that calls them to turn away from the LIE of Satan, the deceptive riches of this world, and our sinful fleshly thinking and feeling the leads us worship the idol of "ME." The Word by which the Holy Spirit brings us to life in Jesus' Name. (vs.27-28) The rich man in hell isn't willing to be honest with himself that it was his sin of idolatry that sealed his fate. It must be God's fault - His Word recorded by Moses and the prophets - His Promise of Jesus - wasn't enough. (vs.29-30) If the Lord God had done more for him - sent someone back from the dead - he would've believed and not come into that place of torment. Here is the lie we tell ourselves - if we just repackage God's Word - to appeal to our culture - no one wants to listen to a windy pastor preaching - liven it up - stream it live - then it'll be effective - that will save more people. Can't we see our own idolatry - trusting in our ideas - our inventions - our new self chosen means of grace - rather than trusting that God's Word is living and active. Our God's whose Word spoken created and sustains this world - is able to bring sinners like me from death to life. His Word combined with simple water becomes a life giving water, rich in grace, and a renewal of the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus. His Word spoken by a sinful stammering called and ordained servant comforts me forgiven. His Word spoken over simple elements of bread and wine make it the food of immortality - food not even the holy angels are privileged to feast upon - the living body and blood of Jesus quenching our thirst and satisfying our hunger for righteousness. (vs.31) Christ's Word alone fills us with forgiveness of sins, life , and salvation.

One did rise from the dead, but despairing disciples didn't believe the report of the women. It was a Stranger who opened to them the Holy Scriptures - showing them from Moses and the prophets that the only way of salvation was for the Christ to suffer, die, and three days physically rise from the dead. Their eyes weren't opened until He took bread, blessed, broke it, and gave it to them saying, *"Take eat, this is My body given for you!"* Come to the Feast - trust His steadfast love written in His Word - rejoice in His salvation - cling to Jesus - your priceless Treasure. Amen.