

## **Not Even from the Dead**

**Intro.** Some years ago there was a commercial for an oil filter with the mechanic saying, “You can pay me *now* or you can pay me *later*.” It meant take care of it now for a *few* dollars with a new filter or wait until later and pay *hundreds* of dollars to replace the engine. There is something of this choice in the parable today.

**I.** The Pharisees probably overheard the story of the dishonest steward and the Lord’s teaching about putting too much trust in the goods of this world. In a previous verse Luke wrote the Pharisees were “money lovers.” They heard these things and mocked the Lord for saying they can’t serve both God and money. “He said to them, ‘You justify yourselves in people’s eyes. But God knows your hearts. What is exalted in human sight is an

abomination in God’s sight.’” The Lord tells great stories, so rich in detail that we are drawn into them. Hearing that dogs *licked* the man’s sores, some of us thought, “Eww! That’s gross.” The Lord described the rich man in vivid language. Purple was an expensive dye and only wealthy, powerful people wore it. The man ate like Thanksgiving was every day. The poor man was so hungry he would have eaten the scraps that fell on the floor. He would have had to fight the dogs for them! The Lord purposely wanted the Pharisees to see themselves in the rich, arrogant man. They believed they were following the Law and the Prophets. The real abomination in God’s sight was the Pharisees being more concerned with fine food and clothes while others had little or nothing to eat or wear; stepping over and around them every day as if they weren’t

there. It was their idolatry, their worship of something other than God that led the Lord to this parable. After death, the rich man continued his arrogant ways, refusing to admit his fault for not caring for his neighbor, Lazarus. Even after the Lord's resurrection the Pharisees refused to believe.

**Concl.** Lazarus exists today. We see him everywhere. It pains us. Either because we think, "Get a job," or we are paralyzed wondering what we should do. Then the light changes and we move on. Been there, done that. The parable was for the Pharisees of the Lord's day. But it clearly has a lesson for us today. We must not let temptation for power or wealth overcome our responsibility to do *something* for Lazarus. There are many ways to feed the hungry in our community. The Food Pantry collects groceries in the narthex every week. It is

wonderful how much is given. There is a community soup kitchen. Another project fills backpacks with food for children on Fridays. A local store recently donated a huge box of new backpacks. I know of a woman who keeps some one dollar bills so she can respond when someone asks. Gift cards for food works too. It can be difficult to see the Lazarus in one another because the struggle is not always obvious to us and it is not always about money. We can have our consolation now in this world or later in the next. It is a choice. This is an echo of the earlier Beatitudes when the Lord promised a reversal for the poor. We are to live that reversal as we share our bread and even the suffering of each other in order to end hunger, poverty and injustice.

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