

Order of Worship for September 25, 2022 8:30 AM

Prelude:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Opening Hymn: *Great Is Thy Faithfulness, O God My Father*" - Hymn #809

Confession and Forgiveness

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **C: Amen.**

Luke 11:29-32:

P: When the crowds were increasing, Jesus began to say, "This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here."

P: This is the Word of the Lord.'

C: Thanks be to God.

P: Lord God, we would like some more indication that You are real and that we can trust what You say.

C: Couldn't You give us better grades, a larger bank account or salary, healing from a chronic disease, children and grandchildren who live stable lives?

P: We are tempted to have You give this world a sign like a sudden growth of church attendance in our country, a return to Christian principles and morality in our culture, some sign from heaven to prove what You say is true.

C: All we seem to have is Your Word.

P: "Jesus said to Thomas, 'Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.' Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:29-31)

ALL: Lord, forgive us for how we doubt Your Word.

ALL: "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:10-11)

P; By the power of His Word God forgives us. His Word is all-sufficient for our salvation. By the authority Christ has given me through this congregation I forgive you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm:

P: Let Your steadfast love comfort me

C: According to Your promise to Your servant.

P: Your hands have made and fashioned me;

C: Give me understanding that I may learn Your commandments.

P: Those who fear You shall see me and rejoice,

C: Because I have hoped in Your word.

P: I know, O LORD, that Your just decrees are righteous,

C: And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.

P: Let Your mercy come to me, that I may live;

C: For Your law is my delight.

**All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

P: Let Your steadfast love comfort me

C: According to Your promise to Your servant.

Prayer of the Day:

P: Let us pray... O God, You are the strength of all who trust in You, and without Your aid we can do no good thing. Grant us the help of your grace that we may please You in both will and deed; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **C: Amen.**

Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 6:9-13

R: God said, "Go and tell this people: 'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

Then I said, "For how long, LORD?" And He answered: "Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, until the LORD has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken. And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste.

But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land."

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Lesson: Romans 10:14-21

R: How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry." Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me." But of Israel He says, "All day long I have held out My hands to a

disobedient and contrary people.”

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Holy Gospel: Luke 16:19-31

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 16th chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: [Jesus said] "There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"

P: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Choir Anthem: Poor Man Lazarus

Sermon Hymn: “In Thee Is Gladness” – Hymn #818

Children's Message: (8:30)

Sermon: “Sign from the Dead” – Luke 16:19-31

One of the most-watched streaming movies last year was the satirical film, *Don't Look Up*. A parody of disaster movies and an allegory about the reaction to climate change, the movie starts with the discovery of a comet that is on a collision course with Earth. Instead of doing anything about it, though, different governments try to ignore it; different corporations try to profit from it. Meanwhile, the comet keeps getting closer and closer until it's impossible to ignore. The government, though, launches a “Don't Look Up” campaign to get people to ignore it, even though it just keeps growing and growing in the sky. Despite the sign that everyone can see, many ignore it until it's too late.

We sometimes think that if there were signs from God, they would be impossible to ignore. If only God would do a miracle, people would be unable to doubt God's existence anymore. Yet throughout the Bible, we see again and again that isn't the case. Even when faced with unimpeachable evidence of God's power, people ignore it. That's true even when we start talking about miraculous occurrences like someone rising from the dead.

While starting our look at the 10 Commandments in confirmation, we looked at when the Israelites received them. God had used Moses to lead the people out of slavery in Egypt into freedom. The people had seen the 10 plagues God used to judge the Egyptians. They'd crossed the Red Sea on dry ground, and seen Pharaoh's army swept away when the waters returned. They'd been led by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. They'd seen the fire and cloud surrounding the top of Mount Sinai, and heard Moses' words. Yet when Moses remains on Mount Sinai talking to God, the people

grow impatient, make a golden calf idol, and proclaim that it was what had led them out of Egypt. Despite all the signs from God they'd seen, it didn't take them long to disobey.

If God gave us the signs we demanded, we'd soon tire of them. We'd demand greater and greater signs, and never be satisfied. "If God plucked a star from the sky at our behest, or removed a mountain suddenly into the sea, or halted the sun in its orbit, these wonders would soon pall. Then a new and more stupendous miracle would be required to validate those past miracles. Each new doubt would cry out for a greater marvel, until life would be diseased by overwhelming curiosity and victimized by prodigies of sensationalism"

Today our Gospel lesson is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, unique among the parables of Jesus for featuring a named character. But while the story is familiar, I want to focus on the ending. The rich man, nameless in the text but sometimes called Dives from the Latin word for rich man, seems to have a suggestion with merit. Why not send someone back from the dead, an emissary from the other world, to convince people of the realities of life? Wouldn't this be the ultimate testimony?

2000 years later, we are even familiar with that happening, a rich man who cares for no one else is convinced to change his ways and change his life after being visited by ghosts. Charles Dickens begins his famous novel *A Christmas Carol* with the words "Marley was dead, to begin with ... This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate." Without knowing that Jacob Marley, Scrooge's deceased partner, was dead, his appearance wouldn't mean anything. It wouldn't be unusual. But if he's dead and still appears to Ebenezer Scrooge? That's unusual. That means something out of the ordinary is happening. It makes us, and Scrooge, pay attention to the message. And then he appears weighed down by chains that he says he forged in life. By his greed and pursuit of money above all else, he forged chains of "cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel." His deeds burdened him not just in this life, but after his death.

Yet for Scrooge, it took not only the appearance of the ghost of Marley, but the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future, as well as Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim to get Scrooge to change his life. Marley's initial appearance wasn't enough on its own.

In a lecture at Concordia Seminary years ago, Dr. Donald Carson pointed out the rich man hadn't changed at all. On earth he regarded Lazarus as a person of no account. Same in hell. Just, "send that no account person to me with some water." Selfish on earth; selfish in hell. Blame others for your problems on earth; blame others in hell. Insist on your way on earth; insist on your way in hell. Don't repent on earth; don't repent in hell.

That's the problem with the rich man's request at the end of our Gospel lesson today. The rich man thinks that if only his brothers could see someone return from the dead, they would repent and not end up in the same place he is, tormented in the flame. But that wouldn't be the case. They had all they needed – Moses and the Prophets, the word of God describing all God had done for his people. A miracle wouldn't change their minds.

As amazing as the parable of the rich man and Lazarus is, the last line is quite the zinger. "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead" (Luke 16:31). It takes your breath away and sends chills down your spine. If the words of Moses and the prophets aren't enough to inspire repentance, the miraculous appearance of someone raised from the dead will meet the same stubborn disbelief.

The same thing happened to the prophets. They told of disasters to come if the people continued in

their rebellion against God. The people continued in their sin, and were punished. God rescued them, and yet the people soon grew unfaithful again. Signs and miracles from God didn't change their selfishness.

We see that in the account of the other Lazarus mentioned in the Bible, Jesus' friend who dies and is raised from the dead. Instead of seeing this miracle and believing in Jesus, the Pharisees and religious leaders plot to kill Lazarus again. His resurrection isn't proof of God's power for them – it's something that's leading the people astray. Seeing someone come back from the dead wasn't enough to get them to repent and turn back to God. Instead, it merely hardened their resolve.

When Jesus himself is raised from the dead, the same thing happens. While those who already trusted in Jesus believed in the resurrection, it took them some convincing. A Roman centurion cries out, "Surely this was the Son of God!" when Jesus dies on the cross, but none of those on guard duty who see the stone rolled away come to faith – they're too worried about saving their own skins. They agree to lie that the disciples stole Jesus' body. They don't believe that Jesus has risen from the dead, or that their lives need to change.

Thanks be to God that we have that sign, and we believe. We know that Moses and the prophets point to Jesus. We know Jesus died and rose again to defeat death, and came back to show us this was true. That's a sign from God we can trust.

Sharing Our Ministry

Confession of Faith: (From the Smalcald Articles)

ALL: We will now return to the Gospel, which not merely in one way gives us counsel and aid against sin; for God is superabundantly rich and liberal in His grace and goodness. First, through the spoken Word by which the forgiveness of sins is preached in the whole world; which is the peculiar office of the Gospel. Secondly, through Baptism. Thirdly, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar. Fourthly, through the power of the keys, and also through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren, Matt. 18:20: Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together, I am there in their midst."

Hymn: *"To God, the Holy Spirit, Let Us Pray"* - **Hymn #768**

Prayers:

ALL: "Abraham said to former rich man, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"

P: Lord God, in this world of doubt and unbelief, why don't You make it easier for people to believe? Why don't You announce that You will appear at Jack Trice a week from now and prove You are real? Why don't You give us some sign that all You say to us in Your Word is real?

C: "Unless you people see signs and wonders you will never believe." (John 4:48)

P: Yes, Lord, don't You think that would help us?

C: "When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." (Matthew 16:2-4)

P: The "sign of Jonah?" O Yes, Easter when You rose from the dead. It wasn't just Your

disciples who knew that, but even Your enemies who had to bribe and threatened the guards at the tomb to lie and say Your body was stolen.

C: “As the crowds increased, Jesus said, ‘This is a wicked generation. It asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation.’” (Luke 11:29-30)

P: So no amount of sign will ever be enough to prove what You say to us.

C: “Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” (John 20:29)

P: Yes, Your words to Thomas a week after Easter.

C: “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.” (James 2:19)

P: So faith is not a matter of proof; it is a matter of trust in You. But how do we trust in You?

C: “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.” (John 20:31)

P: What just words?

C: “And said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.” (Genesis 1:3)

P: But those words can seem so foreign, so hard for us?

C: “Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, ‘Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, ‘Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.”

(Deuteronomy 30:12-14)

P: Your Word can do that?

C: “As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is My word that goes out from My mouth: It will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

(Isaiah 55:10-11)

(other concerns)

ALL: We do have Moses and the Prophets, the Word of God to give us new life, sustain us in our lives, and to assure of us eternal life in Christ Jesus! Amen.

Lord’s Prayer:

Closing Prayer:

P: Blessed Lord, You speak to us through the Holy Scriptures. Grant that we may hear, read, respect, learn, and make them more our own in such a way that the enduring benefit and comfort of the Word will help us grasp and hold fast the blessed hope of eternal life, given to us through our Savior Christ Jesus.

C: Amen.

Blessing: (pastor) **C: Amen.**

Closing Hymn: “*Christ, The Word of God Incarnate*” - **Hymn #540**

Postlude: