

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The rich man, whom the ages have named “Dives” after the Latin word for “rich”, was in agony. And that agony will have no end. By his riches he had self-defined. He was what he ate. In life he was proud and puffed-up. He saw his riches as a sign that God favored him, that he was better than other men and merited his high station in life. He was, as it is said among us, “full of himself.”

But now the riches are gone. They went the way of all temporal trappings – they rusted and spoiled and perished. Now everything he had belongs to others. So it is with earthly things. And although he trusted in his great wealth, in his fine clothes and costly belongings, he learned the hard way that riches avail nothing before God. He had nothing that God hadn’t given him. The very things in which he trusted became a testimony against him.

He died. All men do. There is no escape from death. The Scriptures don’t even record his name. They simply say he was rich, he died, and was buried. And the next words God gave St. Luke to write, the next Words the Lord speaks, should strike fear in every fleshly man: “And being in torment in Hades...”

In life Dives fared sumptuously. He lived in luxury and comfort. He was clothed in purple and fine linen. Now his flesh is unprotected from hell fire. His sin wasn’t being rich. Everything he had was a gift of God, although he never came to understand that, or to believe it aright. But in itself being wealthy isn’t a sin – consider Abraham, the father of all the faithful. He is among the richest men in Scripture. And yet “Abraham’s bosom” is another way to say “heaven.”

Consider Solomon – God bid him ask for anything in the world, but he did not ask for wealth. He asked for wisdom. And God granted him that because his request was made in faith, in love for God. And He added great wealth to him as well. Solomon would write three Books of the Bible. So having earthly material wealth isn’t in itself a sin. Rightly understood it is a blessing from God, a blessing to be used in living out life in love for God and love for neighbor.

Dives’ sin wasn’t being rich. His sin was trusting in his riches. His sin was measuring himself by his riches. His sin was measuring others by what they had rather than by who they are. His sin was failing to love God, as proven by his failure to love neighbor. Lazarus’ suffering had no effect on him. He stepped over the beggar at his gate, withholding even the crumbs from his table from the miserable man.

St. John writes “If someone says ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” Dives saw Lazarus. But he didn’t love him. And that cold-heartedness towards Lazarus was proof that Dives didn’t love God. He who loves God must love his brother also. To fail to do so was Dives’ sin. And that lack of compassion, that lack of love, his all-eclipsing self-love, earned him eternal torment.

Lazarus didn’t merit heaven because he was poor. The Lord doesn’t teach “Blessed are the poor.” He teaches “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” Many are they who are poor with regards to money and belongings, but are still proud and fat and self-

absorbed, which is to say they are lazy in spirit. Lazarus didn't merit heaven because he suffered on earth. Many are those who suffer on earth and find themselves with Dives in torment, in greater suffering, suffering that has no end. But Lazarus, the Scripture records, was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. On earth he was poor – poor in spirit - which means he rightly understood what he merited from God, but hoped in God's promises.

That's what "poor in spirit" means. It means that you know you have lived as Dives, failing to love God and neighbor. It means that you are truly sorry for it. It means you repent of self-adoration and lusting after earthly things, of trusting in earthly things. It means that your love for God is honest and true, indeed it is the center of your life. And that love is shown in your love for neighbor, the souls that God has placed around you in your life. But loving your neighbor is not a work that merits God's grace – it is the response of faith to God's grace.

True love for neighbor is a fruit of faith - faith in the God that loves you. So the Apostle whom Jesus loved writes "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." The summary of the Commandments God gave to Moses is love for God, and love for neighbor. For against love there is no Law.

In torment, Dives asked that Lazarus go to his brothers and warn them, that they not be condemned as Dives was. Father Abraham replied "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them." Holy Scripture testifies of Christ, and God's great love for you in Christ. For greater love has no one than this: than to lay down one's life for his friends. And that Christ did for you.

He who knew riches that Dives will never know, the riches of heaven, made Himself the poorest of men. He humbled Himself. He was truly poor in spirit. By scourge and cross He learned greater sufferings that Lazarus ever knew. And there, on Calvary, He endured the searing torments of Hades as He was forsaken by His Father. But He remained faithful. What He did, He did in love for you. He took away your sin. He clothed Himself not in purple and fine linen, but in your transgressions. And by His death He made Himself the Propitiation for your sins.

You have Moses and the Prophets. You have the Apostles and the Evangelists. They testify of Christ, and God's great love for you in the Son He sent. The Evangelists record His miraculous resurrection, His rising to new life, just as Moses and the Prophets promised. So you have one who has risen from the dead, who testifies to you.

He who rose from the dead traversed the great chasm, descended into hell, and proclaimed victory over the devil; over sin, death and Hades; over selfishness and conceit and hard-heartedness. He proclaimed eternal victory. And then He ascended into heaven, that Abraham's bosom be open to you, that believing in Him you know the eternal riches Lazarus enjoys.

Faith is God's gift to you. By the faith He gives you, you know that you have shortcomings. You know that, like all men, you have been selfishness, and your love for others has failed. By faith you learn that you too have been a Dives. But by that same faith, you trust that Christ died for you, and that in His atoning death you have God's great love.

Receiving that boundless love, in thankfulness, in gratitude, in response to His grace that knows no limits, God's love is shown to others through you. That is a joy of faith. And in that God's love has been perfected in you, so too are His Promises true for you - you may have boldness in the day of judgment. You love Him because He first loved you. By this you know that you abide in Him and He in you, because He has given you of His Spirit.

As Moses proclaimed God's grace to Israel, He pointed to the external, concrete signs of the Promised Land: large and beautiful cities, houses full of good things, wells and vineyards and olives trees. And he promised them that they would eat to the full. So it is for you, as God gives you the things you need for this body and life.

And so it is for you this day as you see Bread and Wine, and eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ. You believe, eat and drink to the full, and the poverty and tribulations of this life are eclipsed by the riches of the true Promised Land, the mansions your Lord has prepared for you. And the Bosom of Abraham is made yours, by God's great love for you in Christ.

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