

# TFTD 25.23 Monday March 31<sup>st</sup>

## Mind the Gap! Luke 16:19-31



**‘There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.” But Abraham said, “Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.” He said, “Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house— for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that**

they will not also come into this place of torment.” Abraham replied, “They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.” 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 listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”

Over the last week, we have been working our way through chapters 15 and 16 of Luke’s Gospel in which all the chosen passages had something to do with money. We have explored: The Lost Coin, the Lost Prodigal Son, the Dishonest Manager and in today’s passage we read about the Rich man and Lazarus. Each one features wealth that has been lost or wealth that has been squandered. And each on one of these readings opens up the possibility for a change of heart, and a change of mind. “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents”

Today we hear the last of these parables on wealth and repentance and it shows us that the choices we make, the words we speak, and the actions we take in this life have consequences in the next. This story however is not an explanation of heaven and hell, or even a story about judgment where the rich people go to hell while the poor go straight to heaven. Nor is it about our distant future but rather it’s about our present deeds and actions in the here and now. Reminding us that our lives are connected and intertwined, it’s about how we show care and concern for both our neighbours and strangers alike.

Throughout this parable gates and gulfs are the constant theme. From beginning to end this encounter is full of divisions and separations. On one side of the gate lies Lazarus, covered in sores, wretched and hungry. On the other side the rich man, dressed in fine linen and purple, he sits at his table and feasts sumptuously every day. Then we have the gulf at the end of this story? On one side of the gulf Lazarus sits comforted in the bosom of Abraham. On the other side the rich man stands tormented in the flames of hell.

The gate represents all those things that separate and divides us from one and other. The gate is a condition of the human heart - it becomes a gulf that exists within us and between us. What this parable asks of us is to

**examine our hearts - what kind of boundaries do we erect between ourselves and other people, religions, countries. Divisions can be small and quickly rooted out, at other times they can grow and fester – like the rich man in today’s passage. We are shown an image of a man who has no regard for anyone other than himself and it’s not a pretty picture.**

**But that is not how we are intended to live our lives. Gates destroy relationships, they are erected to keep people out. Yet every time we see and treat one another with compassion and generosity, gates are opened and gulfs are filled. Breaking down barriers will not always be easy but it has its own rewards. The word of God that opens gates and fills the gulfs is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ who says: “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate, whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture.” Eternal Life.**

**Lenten blessings, Linda**