

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

September 25, 2022



TRAPPED

the way torment blinds us to reality

by Drew Downs

This week's gospel is a unique parable of a man being trapped in what we assume will be eternal torment. It is certainly **not** the cheeriest of stories. But what is most remarkable about this is how self-imposed the man's torment really is.

He spends the story trying to get other people to solve his condition. Not just for what *got* him there, but even for dealing with being there now.

When we feel trapped, what do we do? And how much of our attention is focused on what *other people do to/for us*?

In the parable, the rich man takes no responsibility for helping the world when he was alive. Then he hopes others will help him now that he isn't. But the story's point isn't that the man is a hypocrite. It is to remind us how connected our lives are—and *our* responsibility to one another.

ORDINARY TIME

Fall 2022

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

This week we are heading back to the park! We will be celebrating what was an annual event of worship and picnic in the park. Please consider bringing something to share!

Sunday, September 25, we will gather at **Hawthorn Park at 10:00 am** for service and pot luck. Hawthorn Park is on E Old Maple (heading out toward Rose Hulman). It is a lovely park, with outdoor activities and even has an old labyrinth for walking! We have met several times at this park, most recently in 2019.

For many of us, this will evoke memories of those first gatherings during the pandemic. In the fall of 2020, and again throughout much of 2021, we met at another park, Deming, for Sunday services. The mood for those services was a wealth of emotions, including relief, gratitude, joy, fear, anticipation, and generosity. We had music and conversation, which built up toward our return to gathering in the building again for Pentecost.

There was something about gathering outside, though, in these later days. Something about necessity awakening willingness. Opportunity. Gratitude.

As we will once again gather for worship in the park this Sunday at 10:00 (the regular 8:00 will be in the building), we will do so with new and familiar emotions. Bring them with you like a dish to pass. Offer them to God with thanksgiving. For this will be a day of joy and celebration!

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

Fall 2022

FOR SUNDAY

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 25, 2022

Collect

O God, you declare your almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity: Grant us the fullness of your grace, that we, running to obtain your promises, may become partakers of your heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

From Luke 16:19-31

"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.""

Reflection

Just moments earlier, Jesus told an extraordinarily vivid parable about a father and his two sons. Now, he is telling an even more vivid parable about two men who don't even know each other, whose fates are intertwined by matters of life and death. And one of them, known only as a "rich man" is sent to live out the rest of eternity in Hades.

As vivid as this parable is, and it is *extremely* vivid, it fleshes out a profound image that Jesus is offering us. An image about how we live and relate to one another. *And* how we refuse to live and relate to one another.

ORDINARY TIME

In the telling, Jesus paints this portrait of two men divided by a great chasm. And the rich man is so thirsty, he's like, *somebody get me something to drink!* and Abraham, his tour guide to Hades, is like, *How's that guy supposed to get over here to help you?*

The chasm doesn't only divide them *literally* or *metaphorically*. The rich man can't even recognize the poor man's humanity. He wants *that* guy to serve *him* **still**. Even now. The rich man can't even conceive of his own folly.

The chasm that existed between the men in life continues in death.

For us, we could simply leave it there; mesmerized by the symmetry and balance of the disunity. But Jesus doesn't depict the two as thematic equals. For it was only moments ago that Jesus said that "You cannot serve God and wealth." And then the author wrote: "The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him."

The chasm doesn't divide equally. Nor does it divide necessarily.

I suspect that, in the context of the parable the chasm exists in the afterlife because the rich man reinforced it in life. And that he is conscious of its benefits, while (perhaps intentionally and willfully) blind to its drawbacks.

Given all that Jesus has taught up to this point in the story, it is impossible for me to pretend this is anything *but* a critique of wealth. Not because of what it *necessarily* creates but because of what it *continues* to create.

At any time, the rich man could have ended the suffering Lazarus was enduring in life. He chose not to. Today's richest people could literally end global hunger (and *still* be billionaires). Nothing is *actually* stopping them from doing that now. Nothing that is real, anyway.

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