

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

September 28, 2025



## LISTEN

*even the resurrection isn't the whole point*

by Drew Downs

There's a lesson in this week's gospel that might challenge what we think Christianity is about. At least it seems to defy the popular, American identity of Christianity as being about the affirmation of Jesus, his resurrection from the dead, and the whole doctrinal basis for the church through its creeds and traditions, even to the point of saying specific words as a sure and certain means of one's own personal salvation. Jesus puts the onus before all this.

He puts in the mouth of Abraham a speech about believing Moses and the Prophets. With their witness, one already has enough to go on to be one of God's children.

The posture I'm used to seeing in the church is something that vacillates from being way to confident to way too insecure. This idea, that we have access to the truth if we just listened to it, offers greater security. In loving and trusting enough to listen.

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## 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!

### Worship

The events of last week were terrifying. Not just the public murder of a 31-year-old man on a college campus, but in the horrifying response to it. That so many young people were there, filming it, uploading their own videos, and then millions of people were watching the horror right then and there. The public trauma is beyond calculation. And then, instead of visiting that trauma to heal it, leaders goose-stepped for righteous vindication, both decrying any response they deemed negative while calling for the public execution of the murderer. It is ironic that they would martyr the one who martyred the man.

This is not a reflection of partisan values, but our common Christian faith. We cannot ascribe *goodness* to any act of violence. And this speaks for both the murderer and the actions of the state, including law enforcement and the carceral system.

This weekend, the young man's funeral was well attended and full of political influencers. And, while many spoke of the glory of God and of the young man and of the political causes they valued, it is an appropriate time to remind one another that funerals, like weddings, baptisms, confirmations, and ordinations, are worship services. Their place is not only to honor the dead, but to orient ourselves with God and our neighbors to be beacons of love, sojourners on the Way, champions of redemption, bearers of the Holy Spirit who bring good news to the suffering. This funeral seemed more spectacle than worshipful, which is a real shame. Let us not be so calloused by it that we lose sight of what any act of worship is supposed to be about. God's love and our sharing it.

With love,  
Drew+

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## FOR SUNDAY

*Proper 21C*

September 28, 2025

### **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**

Luke 16:19-31

Jesus said, "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

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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.'"

## Reflection

In the few verses between last week's gospel with the dishonest manager and how we cannot serve both God and wealth, some Pharisees get kind of salty. But Jesus suggests that they use the Law (Torah) to justify themselves rather than in service to God.

This week's gospel reflects that rhetorical infrastructure. That God would have rules that divide the good people and bad people and that these rules are immutable. So, we can't cross the river. Except, as Jesus is telling the story, notice how the rich man expects Lazarus can cross over but, for some reason, he can't? If the wealthy man can't cross over, why could the poor man?

Because this is how the wealthy man treats the poor man in the world. It has nothing to do with the laws of God, but those of Mammon. Under Mammon, the powerful demand the powerless come to them. To him, that is the greater law.

Jesus concludes the teaching with a far more valuable and true teaching than the lie the wealthy sell the world. What the law teaches, when free to teach us, and free of the fake immutable laws of Mammon, is how to live in compassionate Shalom with one's neighbors. We actually do have the law. And if we're reading it and keeping it, we should be fine. It's this other stuff that causes us to feel like we're in hell.

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ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
215 N. 7TH ST TERRE HAUTE IN 47807  
812.232.5165

*STSTEPHENSTH.ORG*

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