

## Trinity 15.

### 1 Timothy 6:6-19

<sup>6</sup>Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; <sup>7</sup>for we brought nothing into the world, so that<sup>[d]</sup> we can take nothing out of it; <sup>8</sup>but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. <sup>9</sup>But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup>For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

#### The Good Fight of Faith

<sup>11</sup>But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness.

<sup>12</sup>Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made<sup>[e]</sup> the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. <sup>13</sup>In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you <sup>14</sup>to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup>which he will bring about at the right time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. <sup>16</sup>It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen.

<sup>17</sup>As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. <sup>18</sup>They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, <sup>19</sup>thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

### Luke 16:19-end

#### The Rich Man and Lazarus

<sup>19</sup>There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. <sup>20</sup>And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, <sup>21</sup>who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. <sup>22</sup>The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup>In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. <sup>24</sup>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." <sup>25</sup>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. <sup>26</sup>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." <sup>27</sup>He said, "Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house— <sup>28</sup>for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment." <sup>29</sup>Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them." <sup>30</sup>He said, "No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." <sup>31</sup>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."

## **Sermon. Revd David Treharne. Our response to stinging teaching about money.**

It is wonderful to back with you my church family: to gather together, to worship, to pray, to break bread, to find out what God has been up to in our individual and corporate lives. To those of you who may be new in the last 2 months I very much look forward to meeting you.

Thank you for your prayers whilst I've been away... and thank you to all those who covered me and thrived in my absence!

Apologies for being off the moment the Queen died (Nicki and co)!!! What a moment in our lives to have to negotiate. Obviously there has been a tremendous outpouring of grief and it's a big change in our lives. However, the stories of faith that have been emerging and the amount of 'God talk' has been wonderful, with last Monday's funeral seeing that God talk hit a peak. So much talk about the Queen's faith and witness together with fantastic acts of worship that showcased some of the best of the Church of England.

And didn't the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, do well with his funeral sermon? I wouldn't have wanted to preach to that audience for all the tea in China! That audience was not only Presidents, Princes and Prime Ministers... it seems to have been billions across the world! The most watched sermon ever. Gosh, I get nervous for a service of 6 people! How he must of felt, I don't know.

I thought that the Archbishop communicated really well the hope of the Christian gospel together with the Queen's deep devotion and hope, her Christian character and the source of that devotion, hope and character... the person of Jesus Christ. He also gave that stinging challenge concerning leadership.

*The Queen's "service to so many people ... had its foundation in her following Christ – God himself – who said that he "came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. People of loving service are rare in any walk of life. Leaders of loving service are still rarer. But in all cases those who serve will be loved and remembered when those who cling to power and privileges are long forgotten."*

I wonder if he had anyone in mind?

That sermon was a great reminder of the relevance of Christianity to daily life. Today's readings are another great reminder of the practical, relevant nature of the Gospel, and like that sermon they also provide a stinging message for all of us.

*"those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup>For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains."* (1 Tim 6:9-10)

Sometimes we understandably struggle to understand the teaching in Scripture. Here, there should be no such difficulty. It's rather clear isn't it? And who here doesn't want to be rich? This Scripture speaks to us, and it stings!

Money, wealth and possessions, are not evil in and themselves... money is a ROOT of all kinds of evil, not evil itself. But money, wealth and possessions are a cause of evil. The love of money can consume the soul, holding it in a vice like grip, preventing and damaging spiritual growth and harms self and others.

When our hearts are consumed by riches, or the desire for riches, we start to become blind and deaf to the needs of our neighbours, and blind and deaf towards the Holy Spirit and words of Scripture.

Indeed, today's Gospel gives a very clear warning of the potential spiritual consequences of selfish gain and blindness and deafness to need.

It's quite remarkable how the Scriptures have run these last 2 weeks. Last week, following the Queen's death and King Charles taking the throne we had in 1 Timothy and the instruction to pray "for kings and all those in authority."

This week as the country faces up to the plight of the UK economy and the Government produces a somewhat controversial mini budget, and as we have had a special general meeting in the Parish to receive the Parish accounts Independently Examined, we have these readings on money. Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the church.

I could bang on about money... the vices that can result... selfishness, greed, avarice - that's extreme greed for wealth and material gain - stress over the maintenance of what we have, relationship breakdown particularly when inheritance is concerned and the folly of barn building – that's building barns to house more and more 'stuff.' Yes, I could rightly bang on about these vices.

And I could bang on about the virtues and disciplines we need to embrace and nurture... contentment, generosity, charity, simplicity, tithing & giving to the church.

But perhaps the most important thing to highlight as an initial response to the words today of Jesus in Luke and the words in 1 Timothy, is to notice. Notice our reaction to these words of Scripture and our struggles with it. Notice what abundance many if not most of us have in our own lives. Notice whether we're going to ignore the Scriptures, make excuses for our particular situation, or act and align our hearts, our money and possessions with the teaching we encounter in the Bible? Notice your response.

Martin Luther King said that there is nothing in this parable that says the rich man went to hell because he was rich. Jesus never made a universal condemnation against all wealth. King goes on to say that the rich man went to hell "not because he was rich, but because he passed by Lazarus every day and never really saw him." "He went to hell because he allowed Lazarus to become invisible...because he failed to use his wealth to bridge the gulf that separated him from his brother Lazarus. In fact, he didn't even realise that Lazarus was his brother."

If Martin Luther King is right the Bibles readings today may not be just about poverty, our wealth & possessions and how we use them.

This is a text about noticing and responding. Jesus calls us to confront the every day reality that we encounter people and situations of need--in obvious ways, and in far less obvious ones--and we walk right by. Most of the time we don't do this on purpose. But when we all do it, the results are the same. Needs are not met and human beings suffer badly. The haves remain more than content and the have nots struggle more and more.

I went to South Africa many years ago just after apartheid and stayed in a stunning guest house. Across the main road was heart wrenching poverty. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. A local said to me. "It's complicated, but after a while you get used to it; you don't see it and emotionally respond to it."

Poverty is complicated, but I know I/we make it more complicated that it should be or needs to be. Generosity, simplicity, mercy, charitable giving combining: a heart for humanity, desire for transformation alongside money and a plan of action, can and does change things.

As a church locally I hope and pray we can see need and respond appropriately. Through our local plans... the wellbeing project, pastoral care, children, youth and families ministry, doing relationship well, encouraging one another and enjoying one another, praying with and for one another, community engagement, partnership working, charity giving... individually and corporately we can make a huge difference to the Lazarus' of this world and still have more than enough to enjoy.

Yes, these are very hard days financially... and some amongst us may lean more towards Lazarus than the rich man, but many of us have capacity to hear the stinging Scriptures, hear and see the needs of Lazarus and respond.