

Crumbs – Good News for the Diaspora!

SUNDAY.

They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

– *Luke 16:29.*

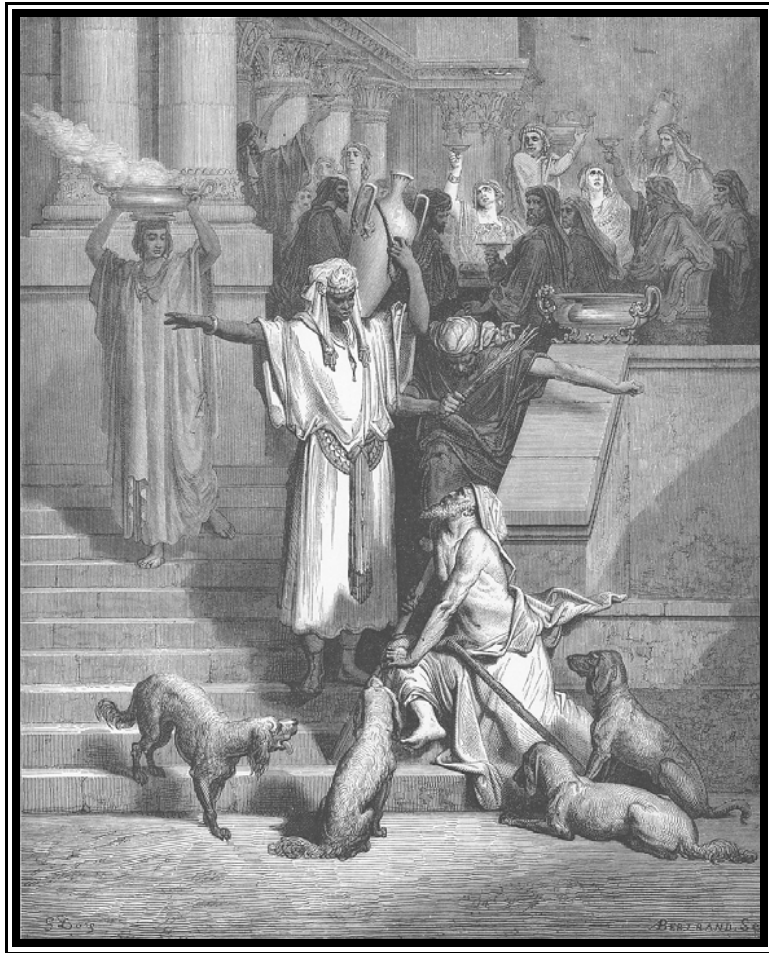


Illustration: Lazarus and the Rich Man

A Devotional for the
Week of the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany*.

There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day; and a certain beggar named Lazarus was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said: "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." But Abraham said: "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence." Then he said: "I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come to this place of torment." Abraham saith unto him: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." And he said: "Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." And he said unto him: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." (Luke 16:19-31.) We sinners must turn to Jesus while we live; then shall we obtain salvation. Who does not turn to Jesus will be damned. To the end that we turn to Jesus, God has given us the Word of Jesus through which the Holy Ghost operates within us. Other means of conversion God does not give. Nothing else could convert us. This is most certainly true.

PRAYER. – God, who has given to me the Word of Jesus, have mercy upon me, and grant that I may gladly properly use this Word and at all times turn to my Savior, in order that I may not be lost, but obtain eternal bliss with all the elect. Help me, help me, O my Lord! Amen.

Hymn 552, 4.

Then woe to those who scorned the Lord,
And sought but carnal pleasures,
Who here despised His precious Word,
And loved their earthly treasures!
With shame and trembling they will stand,
And at the Judge's stern command
To Satan be delivered.

MONDAY.

Which things also we teach, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.. – 1 Corinthians 2:13.

To the end that His Word and Gospel may be preached on earth until the last day, Jesus, having prayed to His heavenly Father, chose twelve from among His disciples, whom he also called *Apostles*, or ambassadors. They were the following: *Simon Peter*, and his brother *Andrew*, *James* and his brother *John*, *Philip* and *Bartholomew*, *Matthew* and *Thomas*, *James*, the son of Alphaeus, *Simon*, called *Zelotes*, *Judas*, the brother of James, and *Judas Iscariot*, the traitor. (Luke 6:12-16.) After the sad end of Judas Iscariot, *Matthias* took his place. (Acts 1:26.) These men, who had been with the Lord during His sojourn on earth, from the baptism of John unto the day that He was taken up into heaven, were to be His witnesses to all the earth of those things which they had seen and heard, and witnesses of His resurrection. Later *St. Paul*, who had received special revelations, was added to their number. (Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:11-12.) These men, by word of mouth and by their writings, were to proclaim the Gospel,

the Word of Jesus, to all the world. For this work they were to receive the gift, the special gift, of the Holy Ghost, so that the things which they spoke and wrote were not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, as our text above says. Others besides them received this special gift (Acts 2:1-4.); thus also the evangelists *Mark* and *Luke*. So in the writings of the evangelists and apostles, which we have in the Bible, we have the Word of God, the Word of Jesus, just as divinely pure, unalloyed, and certain as if Jesus, our Lord, stood before us and preached. And this, even this, we must hear and read.

PRAYER. – I give thanks unto You, merciful God and Father, that in the Bible You have given me Your Word, Your Gospel, so that I may know my Savior aright, believe in Him, and through faith obtain salvation. I pray You, grant to me Your grace, that by the power and operation of Your Holy Ghost I hold Your Word sacred, and gladly hear and learn it, and be confirmed in faith, until in eternal joy and bliss I shall see what here I have believed. Do this for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Hymn 2, 1. 2.

LORD, open Thou my heart to hear,
And by Thy Word to me draw near,
Let me Thy Word still pure retain,
Let me Thy child and heir remain.

The Word doth move the inmost heart,
Thy Word doth perfect health impart,
Thy Word my soul with joy doth bless,
Thy Word brings peace and blessedness.

TUESDAY.

He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth Him that sent me.

– *John 8:11.*

Besides the apostles the Lord Jesus appointed other disciples, seventy in number, and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place whither He Himself would come. And He said unto them: "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth laborers into His harvest. Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves." And furthermore He instructed them not to be concerned about their food, but to let those provide for them who would receive them and their message. But if the people of a city would not receive them, then they were to say publicly: "Even the very dust of your city which cleaveth on us we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." And lastly Jesus said: "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me." (Luke 10:1-16.)

This word of the Lord applies to all preachers of His Word at all times, that is, to those who preach His Word right and pure throughout. Observe that well! If your preacher, be he eloquent or not, preaches the Word of Jesus, then you must hear him as if you heard Jesus Himself. You must listen to the Word, not to the person. Do you understand? If, however, you despise such a preacher, then in reality, you despise Jesus; and if you despise Jesus, you despise the great God that sent Him. And what will then become of you?

PRAYER. – Lord God, Heavenly Father, I thank You that You have given us Your Word and have also appointed the holy ministry. I pray You, in the name of Your dear Son Jesus Christ, and at His command, to send forth faithful laborers into Your vineyard, and to grant that those whom You have sent that they may abide in the true doctrine and lead a Christian life to their end. And give to me and to all Christians Your Holy Spirit, that at all times we may gladly receive the Word which they preach, assiduously follow its teachings, and in the end obtain eternal life, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, our Lord. Amen.

Hymn 110, 9.

O grant that in Thy Holy Word | We here may live and die, dear Lord;
And when our journey endeth here, | Receive us into glory there.

WEDNESDAY.

So will I compass Thine altar, O Lord, that I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Thy wondrous works. Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honor dwelleth. – Psalm 26:6-8.

Surely, this text was in the mind of Anna. Anna was a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and was now a widow of about fourscore and four years. She was a prophetess, a woman endowed with especial gifts of the Holy Spirit. But though she was a prophetess, yet, unmindful of her great age, she departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And for this she received a great and blessed reward: she found Jesus in the temple. And when she had found Him, she gave thanks to the Lord and spoke of Him to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. (Luke 2, 36-38.)

What a pattern for old Christians! They look back upon a long pathway of life which they have traversed. Soon they must pass through the valley of death to their eternal home, where heavenly peans* resound, where all the wonders of God's grace are seen and fully known, where the glory of God shall be upon them. Meanwhile, what better thing can they do than to compass God's altar, where they publish with the voice of thanksgiving, where they tell of all His wondrous works, where His honor dwelleth, yea, where they find Jesus and His Word and Sacrament? Oh, may God grant His Holy Spirit to all old Christians, that, leaning upon their staff, if need be, they regularly wend their way to the house of God. And oh! may they also pray, and speak of Jesus to their kin and to other Christians. This is a

fitting habit for aged pilgrims whose goal is heaven. – Much more, however, ought *young* Christians to be found where God would equip them for the perilous way through this life to heaven.

PRAYER. – Lord God, Heavenly Father, grant me, I beg You, Your Holy Spirit, that I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all the wondrous works which You have done for our salvation and will do for our eternal happiness, and that I may love the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your honor dwells. And there bless me, O God, with blessings from on high, that I may know my Savior ever better, and believe in Him ever more firmly, and finally finish my course joyfully, and through Him enter my eternal home. Amen.

Hymn 78, 2-4.

His sov'reign power, without our aid,
Made us of clay, and formed us men;
And when like wandering sheep we strayed,
He brought us to His fold again.

We are His people, we His care,
Our souls and all our mortal frame:
What lasting honors shall we rear,*
Almighty Maker, to Thy name?

We'll crowd Thy gates with thankful songs,
High as the heavens our voices raise:
And earth, with her ten thousand tongues,
Shall fill Thy courts with sounding praise.

THURSDAY.

The seed is the Word of God. – Luke 8:11.

Yes, the seed from which the fruit of faith and salvation grows is the Word of God. But why, O why do so many that hear the Word of God nevertheless not believe and obtain salvation? – It is with the Word as it is with the seed which a sower went out to sow. As he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. Thus many who hear the Word do not allow this divine seed to enter their hearts; it lies loosely upon the surface. Then cometh the devil and taketh it away, lest they believe and be saved. And some of the sower's seed fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. Thus many receive the Word with joy; but they do not let it take root; for a while they believe, but in time of temptation they fall away. Still other of the sower's seed fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. Thus many allow cares and riches and pleasures of this life to choke the Word of God, so that it brings no fruit to perfection. Hence it is not the Word's fault that so many do not believe and are not saved, but it is their own fault. – Some seed, however, fell on good ground, and brought forth fruit a hundredfold. Thus some hear the Word of God, and keep it in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience: they become believing children of God, and in the end obtain salvation. This is not owing to their good conduct, but to the grace of God and the divine power of the Word. (Luke 8:4-15.)

O my dear reader, which ground do you resemble?

PRAYER. – Almighty God and Father, who made heaven and earth and who has prepared salvation and eternal blessedness, and did profusely scatter the heavenly seed of Your divine Word among us, I give thanks to You for these, Your gracious gifts and treasures. I beg You to so prepare my heart by Your Word and Spirit that I may be good land, guarding myself against false confidence, indifference, instability, care, avarice, and lust, taking firm root in Your gracious Word, and patiently enduring every heat, storm, temptation, and tribulation that may afflict me, that in an honest and good heart I may bring forth rich fruit – praising and honoring You now and forever. Amen.

Hymn 248, 5.

With Thy gift my heart endowing,
 Make it new and clean and fair;
Let it in true love be glowing,
 Living in Thy grace fore'er;
Give me courage bold and good,
Sanctify my flesh and blood,
Let me, trusting in Christ's merit,
Worship God in truth and spirit.

FRIDAY.

We have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world. – John 4:42.

In the first year of His public career, while He was going from Judea into Galilee, and must needs pass through Samaria, Jesus had come to Jacob's well, before the city of Sychar, and there met a sinful woman of Samaria, whom, through His words, which are spirit and life, and through the wonderful manifestation of His divine glory, He converted from a life of sin to faith in Him, the promised Christ. (You may read this in John 4:1-26.) Then the woman went into the city with haste, and said to the men: "Come, and see a man who told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" She wanted others to share the joy she had found in her faith. And they, at once inclined to believe on Jesus because of what the woman said, went out of the city, and came unto Him, and besought Him to tarry with them. And He abode there two days and proclaimed unto them the salvation which had appeared in Him. And many more believed in Jesus because of His own Word, saying to the woman: "Now we believe, not because of Thy saying; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world." (Read this in John 4:27-42.)

This is the proper way to obtain true faith in Jesus: see Him for yourself, and hear His Word. And true faith is to be fully assured that

Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world. You, too, can come to true faith in Jesus and attain to firmness in this faith in this way. In your Bible you have His faithful image and His pure Word. May God graciously work perfect assurance within you, that you, too, may say: Henceforth I believe, not because of the saying of others; for I have heard Jesus myself, and know that He is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world. This is the faith through which you shall conquer all and enter heaven.

PRAYER. – God, my God, grant me Your Holy Spirit, that I may at all times seek, see, and hear Jesus myself in His Word, which You have so graciously given me. And thus, my God, let me grow ever more firm and ever more certain, yes, become firmly established in my faith and fully assured that Jesus is indeed the Christ promised in the Old Testament, the world's and my – even my – Redeemer and Savior. Amen.

Hymn 83, 9.

Christ Himself, my Shepherd, feeds me,
 Peace and joy my spirit fill;
In a pasture green, He leads me
 Forth beside the waters still.
Oh! naught to my soul is so sweet and reviving,
As thus unto Jesus alone to be living;
True happiness this, and this only, supplies,
Through faith on my Savior to fasten mine eyes.

SATURDAY.

And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him.
 – John 9:38.

In the last year of His visible sojourn on earth, when he had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Tabernacles, Jesus

restored a man's eyesight who had been born blind. He did it on a Sabbath day. The man born blind knew, indeed, that it was Jesus who opened his eyes, but he did not know Jesus as he should. Now when the Pharisees, who were hypocrites and hated Jesus, said to the man born blind that Jesus could not be the Son of God because He did this on a Sabbath day, he answered: "He is a prophet." And when they continued to revile Jesus, and said that He was a sinner, and that they knew not whence he was, the man born blind answered: "Why, herein is a marvelous thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened my eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, He could do nothing." Then the Pharisees said to him: "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" And they cast him out. -Then Jesus found him and said to him: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" that is, on Christ, the promised Messiah, who, according to the testimony of John the Baptist, was now to appear. He answered: "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" Jesus said unto him: "Thou dost both see Him, and it is He that speaketh with thee." Then said the man that was born blind: "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him. (John 9.)

All the angels of God worship our Lord and Savior. And the hour shall come in which all must bow their knees before Jesus, whether they want to or not. Now, then, O sinner, whom Jesus has redeemed, and whom He so kindly approaches through His Word, revealing Himself as the Savior, believe in Him and worship Him with exceeding great joy through the Holy Ghost, that when He shall appear in His glory, you may exult and cry: "My Savior!"

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, true God and man, my Savior and Redeemer, I believe in You, I love and praise and glorify You, I worship You with all the angels and the elect in heaven and on earth. Preserve my faith through Your miraculous Word, through Your gracious Holy Spirit. Bring me where believing shall be turned to seeing, where my love shall be perfect, my praise and glorifying shall be heavenly, my worship an everlasting joy. Amen.

Hymn 394, 2.

And we believe in Jesus Christ,
 His own Son, our Lord, possessing
 An equal Godhead, throne and might,
 Through whom comes the Father's blessing;
 Conceived of the Holy Spirit,
 Born of Mary, virgin-mother,
 That lost man might life inherit,
 Made true man, our Elder Brother,
 Was crucified for sinful men,
 And raised by God to life again.

* Notes:

epiphany – The word refers to a manifestation, usually of God and His light; for example, the burning bush in Exodus 3. The Church season of Epiphany bespeaks Jesus, the Light of the world. This ancient festival of the Church includes Christ's manifestation or appearance to the Magi who saw the star, to His Baptism in the Jordan River and to His turning water into wine at the Wedding in Cana.

pean – This is a two-syllable word meaning a joyful song or fervent expression of praise and exultation.

rear – One speaks of rearing a child in the Christian faith. The word used in this hymn stanza means to raise up.

These devotions are adapted from *Crumbs* by C. M. Zorn (1914).

The illustration is from *The Doré Bible Gallery* (circa 1885).

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