

When we hear the parables, there's often many things that we can learn from them. Just like any part of the Bible, God wants to teach us lots of different things at the same time. And so it can be helpful to focus on one of those things to learn what God has to say. And in our parable for today that Jesus tells us, we're going to be focusing on the rich man and his actions in life and after life for that matter, which leads us to a very important question, the one that we're going to consider today. Do our works match up with our faith? Because in the case of the rich man, that's obviously not true. His works don't match his faith. And so that's the question that we want to consider. Because Jesus presents the question this way. He says to us, "Bear fruits in keeping with repentance." And he also calls on us to do things, to bear fruits that are true to our faith, to do those things. so that they are one with one another. And James also calls on us to show our faith by our works, to show what it is that we believe by the things that we do. Because in a sense, Christians, we can lie about what we believe. We can say anything and we'll just have to take you at your word. But our actions, our works never lie. You will know them by their fruits. So the question we are considering today is just that: do our works match up with our faith?

Because, like I said, in the case of the rich man that we have here in Luke chapter 16, they obviously don't. And we know that this rich man at least claims to have faith. We know that partly because of what he's doing after he dies. When he is in hell looking up towards heaven and he sees Abraham, he recognizes Abraham. He even calls him father Abraham. And the only people who are going to call Abraham father are those who claim to be descended from Abraham. So here is a man who claims to be part of Israel. He probably went to the temple every day. He probably did everything that a good observant member of Israel was supposed to do.

And he's also incredibly wealthy, and that must've been a sign of God's favor, right? God must love him if he's given him so much. And it's actually quite incredible just how much he has. Because we're told in this parable that he was closed in purple and wore fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day. And the most important word in that sentence that shows us just how wealthy he is, is the word purple. Now that probably sounds strange to us. Purple is just a color. What does that have to do with anything? I bet all of you have something in your house that's colored purple, right? It's just a color. But in these days, it shows just how wealthy this man is. Because the only way to get the color purple in the days of Jesus was to go to a very specific part of the Mediterranean ocean and then to find a very specific kind of snail. And after you had crushed thousands of these snails, you would get enough dye to color one piece of clothing. So in other words, to be dressed in purple shows that this guy is wealthy beyond belief. He is as rich as a king. In fact, the fact that he wears pretty much only purple shows that he is insanely wealthy, a multi-billionaire by our standards, the kind of man who could probably stand to lose half of his wealth and not even feel it. He wouldn't even notice. And he'd still have more money than any of us ever will in our entire lifetime.

Now that's an important consideration for us, because if he is so wealthy as the Bible presents him to be, he would have no troubles helping someone in need. But there, next to his gate that he saw every single day going out of his house to go to the temple or coming back into throw a party, was a poor man by the name of Lazarus. This man needed his help. We cannot imagine that he didn't know he was there, because the rich man recognized Lazarus being with Abraham. He knew who Lazarus was. He could've helped him and he wouldn't even have felt it. But he refuses day after day after day to help the man that needed his help the most. And you can just imagine him coming back from the temple, after just worshipping God in all of the splendor of his riches, and then ignoring the man who needed his help the most. His works did not match his faith.

Now, Christians, I ask you on this day, do your works match your faith? Now, I recognize, of course, that we are not saved by our works. We do not make God love us by the things that we do. I also

recognize that we are sinners, even as Christians, that the works which we do are full of sin. But do we use those two truths as an excuse to do the things that we know we shouldn't be doing? Do we leave church on Sunday morning to go back to the weekly grind where we cheat and defraud our neighbor? Do we get up from our prayers and then ignore the needs of the person we know needs our help the most? Do our works match up with our faith? Because if they don't, Christians, we are running a very real danger, a danger of ending up just like the rich man. And there is perhaps nothing in the Scriptures that is said more commonly than the call to love our neighbor. To love our neighbor the same way that we love God. To love our neighbor the same way that we love ourselves. To take care of the one who needs our help, because that is what God has called us to be. We even heard it in our epistle lesson for today. The one who says that he loves God, but hates his brother is in fact a liar. He doesn't love God at all. Because to love God is to listen to God, and to listen to God is to listen to his Word and the things which he has called us to do, to care for one another. As Jesus says, you will know, they will know, the world will know that you are Christians by the love you have for one another. This is who we are called to be, Christians. A new people. A holy people. People who have been redeemed from sin. And when we have our works match our faith, we are living the way that God would have us live, set free from sin, becoming more and more and more like Jesus in all things. Because that's what it means to be holy, to be like Jesus. To do the things that Jesus would do, because that's who we are as Christians.

So Christians, on this day I call for you to live not like the rich man whose works did not match up with his faith, who talked the talk but did not walk the walk and ultimately ended up suffering the judgment of God. But I call for you to live like Lazarus, trusting in God, a new and holy people in Jesus, people who walk in the law of God, who do the things that he would have us do, because he has made us to be his holy people. All I'm asking you to do is to be the Christians you have been called to be, to have your works match up with your faith in Jesus.

To Jesus be all the glory, now and forever. Amen.