

Sunday 11/10/24 – Panama Methodist Church

Sermon Title: “Thankfulness: Sermon Series: (Part 2 of 3)

(Slides 1-15 will be listed in order throughout this sermon 😊!)

Good morning once again, brothers and sisters. In less than three weeks, we have the Holiday of Thanksgiving. As the name of this holiday suggests, we are supposed to be “Thankful.” We are supposed to be “Thankful for food, shelter, clothing, God, our families, our church, and the many blessings in our lives.” Since we are in a season of “Thankfulness,” we are going through a three-week sermon series on “Thankfulness.” This sermon series will hopefully make us more thankful for God, and for everything that God has given us. Here, once again, is our cover picture for this sermon series:

(Slide 1 – (“Thankfulness” Series - Picture))



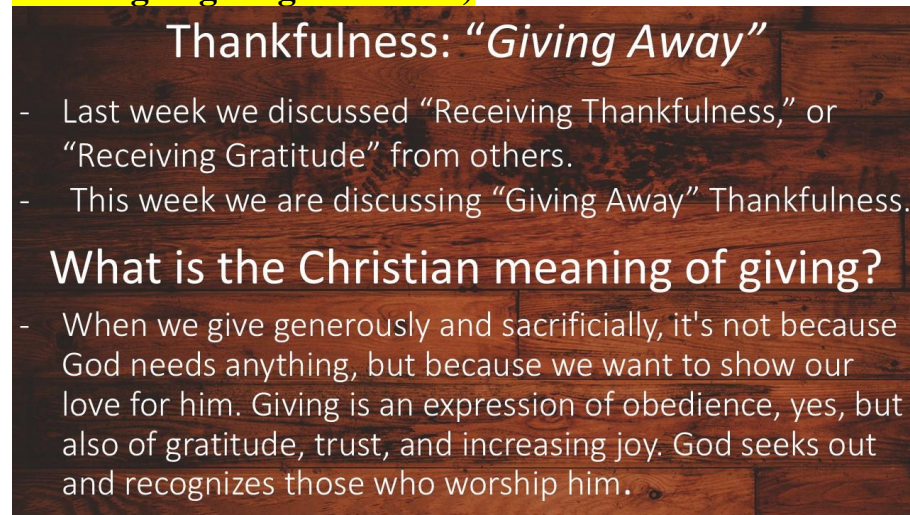
Last Sunday we talked about being the receiver or the recipient of “Thankfulness,” and “Gratitude,” as the “Good Samaritan” gave and helped the man who was robbed, stripped, and beaten. This morning though, I want to talk about being the giver of “Thankfulness,” or “Gratitude,” as our sermon this morning is called “Giving Away.” Here is a picture of our “Thankfulness: Sermon Series: Part 2, “Giving Away”.

(Slide 2 – (“Thankfulness” Series: Part 2 - Picture)



To touch on what we discussed last Sunday, and to introduce more the “Thankfulness” topic of “Giving Away” let us look at a slide that includes these both:

(Slide 3 – (“Thankfulness: “Giving Away” and “What is the Christian meaning of giving” - Picture)



I know that last Sunday I mentioned the scripture from Acts 20:35, that says “**It is more blessed to give than to receive**” (Acts 20:35, NRSV). Receiving “Thankfulness” and “Gratitude” are great things, but once again I want to talk this morning about “Giving Away.” Of the many scriptures or stories in the scriptures that I thought could really shed light on the importance “Giving Away,” in this season of “Thankfulness,” I thought of the parable or story of “The Rich Man and Lazarus.” Like our parable or story from last Sunday, the story of “The Rich Man and Lazarus” is in the gospel of Luke, and only the Gospel of Luke. This parable or story from Jesus is not a parable or story against wealth. There is nothing wrong with having wealth, there is a problem though with greed, hardness of heart, and loving money and possessions more than God. If God blesses us with wealth and possessions, God expects us to be generous as an extension of his love and faithfulness that he has for us all.

If you want to get your Bibles, or your Bible Apps, we are going to go through Luke 16:19-31. Once again, we are going to go through Luke 16:19-31, which is about The Parable or Story of “The Rich Man and Lazarus”. Beginning in Luke 16:19 God’s Word says:

(Slide 4 – (Luke 16:19-31, “The Rich Man and Lazarus”))

The Parable or Story of “The Rich Man and Lazarus”
(Luke 16:19-31, NRSV)

¹⁹ There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰ And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹ who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. ²² The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried.

(Slide 5 – (Luke 16:19-31, “The Rich Man and Lazarus”))

The Parable or Story of “The Rich Man and Lazarus”
(Luke 16:19-31, NRSV)

²³ In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴ 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.” ²⁵ 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.

(Slide 6 – (Luke 16:19-31, “The Rich Man and Lazarus”))

The Parable or Story of “The Rich Man and Lazarus”
(Luke 16:19-31, NRSV)

²⁶ 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.” ²⁷ He said, “Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house— ²⁸ for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.”

(Slide 7 – (Luke 16:19-31, “The Rich Man and Lazarus”))

The Parable or Story of “The Rich Man and Lazarus”
(Luke 16:19-31, NRSV)

²⁹ Abraham replied, “They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.” ³⁰ He said, “No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.” ³¹ 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.””

After reading the whole parable or story of “The Rich Man and Lazarus,” I want to now go through these scriptures together. So, keep your Bibles or Bible Apps open. The question to consider, is how does this parable or story connect to “Giving Away” and the topic of “Thankfulness?” Let us look together, starting in Luke 16:19. Luke 16:19 says there was a “Rich Man”. We do not know who exactly this rich man was, as there might be different theories, but he was very wealthy and powerful. Again, having wealth is not a sin. Being greedy, having a hard heart, and loving money more than you love God, are sins, however.

Sometimes I think as a person of faith that having a lot of financial wealth or material possessions is actually a burden, because God has allowed us to be caretakers of this. As a result, God expects us to serve him with some of what he has given us.

I remember asking one of the first churches that I served the question years ago, “How many of you here would like to inherit ten-million dollars?” Almost every hand went up, but mine did not. Why? Well, while many of us would keep some of that wealth, we would also as people of faith want to “give away” some of it to serve others in Christ’s name. Financial wealth then, can be a burden. I told this to an older man once, and he told me that he is willing to get financially wealthy and take that risk!

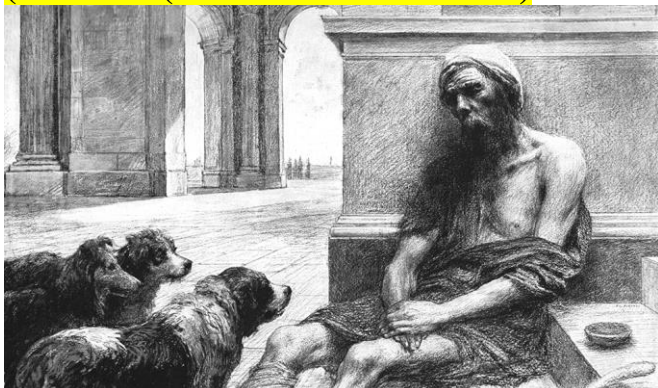
So, we have a financially rich man, who has a massive house, tons of possessions, probably servants, and everything he would ever want. Luke 16:19, also says that this man was dressed in purple. Why is this significant? It is significant because purple is the color of royalty. To mock Jesus on the day of his crucifixion, the Roman soldiers put a purple robe on him, as Jesus claimed to be a king. Purple is a color of royalty. Now Luke 16:19 also says that the “Rich Man” in this story “feasted sumptuously” every day. For the “Rich Man” in this story, every day was like “Thanksgiving.” There is nothing wrong with this, although “Gluttony,” or overindulgence is a sin. Outside of the gate of the rich man’s house

was a man named Lazarus. Lazarus was poor and seemed to be sick. The scripture even says in Luke 16:20 that Lazarus was “covered with sores.” Did Lazarus have leprosy or some other illness or disease? He certainly had something, and it seemed that Lazarus lay at the gate of the rich man’s house probably because he had nowhere else to go.

According to Luke 16:21, Lazarus was not expecting the “Rich Man” to give him money, a place in his house, or anything material. In fact, all Lazarus hoped for was some of the food that “fell from the rich man’s table.” Luke 16:21 even says that the rich man’s dogs would come out and lick Lazarus’ sores that were all over him. So, Lazarus was not expecting anything extravagant, he was just hoping for some of the food that fell on the floor that rich man was going to likely discard or feed to his dogs. Not really an unreasonable request, to ask for what was going to go into the trash or to the dogs.

Of the many portraits or depictions of Lazarus that I have seen, here is one of my favorites:

(Slide 8 – (“Portrait of Lazarus”))



This picture portrays Lazarus as sick, hungry, destitute, and having the rich man's dogs lick his sores. Unfortunately, as Luke 16:22 also says, "the poor man" or Lazarus "died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham". We are not told what the cause of Lazarus' death was, and as an aside was this the Lazarus that Jesus raised from the dead? I do not think so, but who knows. In addition to "the poor man" or Lazarus dying, Luke 16:22 also says, "The rich man also dies and was buried". Here is another portrait that portrays Lazarus, but also the "Rich Man"

(Slide 9 – ("Portrait of the Rich Man and Lazarus"))



So, Lazarus and the "Rich Man" both die, and rich man was buried. In Luke 16:23, we read that the "Rich Man" was being tormented in Hades or Hell. Sometimes when some people say in the Apostle's Creed, that we said last Sunday, that Jesus "descended to Hell," I believe that interpretation. It is correct to say that

Jesus “descended to the dead.” What is the difference? Well in Jesus’ time, it was believed that both heaven and hell were below us. Two different places, and when Jesus died on the cross, his soul descended to Hades or Scheol. I do not personally believe that Jesus was in hell for three days before his resurrection, but some do. Jesus spoke of his kingdom being “beyond this world.” You see Jesus began tell us heaven was not here on this earth, although hell was. Generally, at this time though, heaven and hell were both below, but Jesus said his kingdom is not of this world.

As we continue to look at Luke 16:23, the “Rich Man” is in hell, and is being tormented. Suddenly the “Rich Man” looks up from his torment and far off he sees Abraham and Lazarus by his side. Why would the great Father Abraham and Lazarus be in hell? Well, they were visiting, if you can believe it. Once the “Rich Man” sees Abraham and Lazarus, Luke 16:24 says “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.” So, the “Rich Man” is literally burning in the fires of hell. He sees Abraham with Lazarus by his side, and I would like to think they were there to see how the “Rich Man” would respond to them. I remember at the second seminary school I attended in Dayton, Ohio one the pastors preached on this parable or story. What was said was eye opening for me. I mean think about it, the “Rich Man” had not helped Lazarus, and he knew it!

He knew that all Lazarus wanted was the scraps from his table, and he did not give them to Lazarus. Lazarus could have very well died of starvation, and even in the fires of hell the “Rich Man” could care less. Can you believe that the “Rich Man” is in the fires of hell, and he still does not care about what he did to Lazarus. There is no apology, and there is no plea for forgiveness. Instead, the “Rich Man” does not even address Lazarus. He addresses Abraham and asks Abraham to order Lazarus to dip his finger in water and cool his tongue. When I have read this, I thought, “there’s water in hell?” Well, there is in this story or parable! Here is a picture I found of this scene in our gospel of Luke 16:19-31 reading for this morning:

(Slide 10 – (“Touch the tip of my tongue with water on your finger”))



We do not know if Lazarus did actually dip his finger in water and cool the tongue of the “Rich Man” in the fire, but based on the next verse Lazarus probably did not do this. In Luke 16:25 it says, “But Abraham said, “Child, remember that during your lifetimes you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil

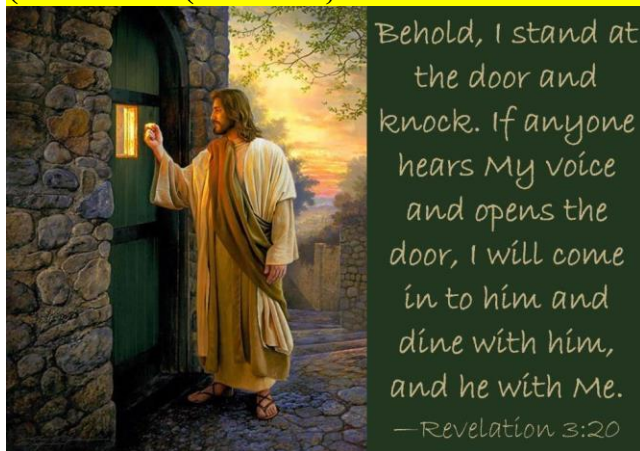
things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony.” Once again, the sin was not being wealthy. The sin was being selfishness, hardness of heart, and worshiping money over God. Luke 16:19-31 does not say that the “Rich Man” worshiped money and possessions, but to me it is pretty obvious that he did.

In Luke 16:26 Abraham continues on, saying, “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.” In other words, this is the rich man’s only visit from heaven. So, everyone will stay where they are, I guess with only exception being new arrivals to hell. With this said, the “Rich Man” then said to Abraham in Luke 16:27-28 this, “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 will not also come into this place of torment”. So, the rich man does not want his five brothers to go to hell, which is a good thing, but as you notice, the “Rich Man” still has not even acknowledged Lazarus. No apology, no ask for forgiveness. Instead, the “Rich Man” begs Abraham to send Lazarus to his father’s house to warn his five brother to repent and live for God. Lazarus was not recognized by the “Rich Man” in life or in hell, and he literally, once again, asked Abraham to have Lazarus put his finger in water to touch and cool his burning tongue in hell. Then the “Rich Man” asks that Lazarus be his messenger boy to go his father’s house and warn his five brother to repent live Godly lives.

Abraham replies though with the same thing that the “Rich Man” who is now in hell knew. Luke 16:29 says, “Abraham replied, “They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to him,” speaking of the rich man’s five brothers. Abraham then replies to the plea of the “Rich Man” in Luke 16:30 with this regarding the five brothers of the “Rich Man,” “He said, “No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.” Abraham then replies to close our gospel of Luke 16:31 reading with, “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.” The implication here, is that even Jesus rising from the dead will not change the five brother’s hardened hearts. The five brothers have to repent and turn to God by themselves.

Whenever I have read or preached on the parable or story of “The Rich Man and Lazarus” I think of Revelation 3:20. Here is a picture of this scripture, depicting Jesus knocking at a door.

(Slide 11 – (“Behold, I stand at the door and knock”))



If you have ever seen Revelation 3:20 with Jesus depicted knocking on a door, every single depiction that I have ever seen has Jesus knocking. Yet, on the side of the door that Jesus is on, there is no doorknob. At least, I have never seen a depiction of Revelation 3:20 with this, which says, once again:

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me
(Rev. 3:20, NKJV).

I connect this to the parable or story of “The Rich Man and Lazarus,” because we have to chose to let Jesus into our hearts and our lives. In the same way, Abraham told the “Rich Man” when he visit him in hell with Lazarus, that the rich man’s brothers had to turn to God on their own. I heard it said once of Revelation 3:20, that Jesus is a gentleman. He will knock on the doors of our hearts, but we must choose to let him in. We must repent and have faith in Christ, the way the “Rich Man’s” brother need to repent and come to God on their own.

I have talked to people before who have struggled with the idea of hell. A place of permanent and eternal damnation. I mean that is a lot take in and consider, but Jesus did talk about hell. Someone asked me once if I believed in hell. I said that to them not only do I believe in hell, but I also know some people here on earth that exist in a “living hell.” Sometimes the “living hells” that people live in are avoidable or are unavoidable. This being said though, if there is a hell, which there is, then who is there? I believe, that everyone that is in hell wants to be there.

Or if they do not want to be there, they certainly do not want to change or repent. I mean the “Rick Man” in our parable or story had no desire to change. He had no apology, no remorse. He only wanted his tongue cooled with Lazarus’ finger with cold water. He did not repent, or even acknowledge that Lazarus, who he wronged, was even there. Did the “Rick Man” want to be in hell? I am sure that he did not, but he did nothing show Godliness, repentance, remorse, of faith. Given this, as the great writer CS Lewis said of the people in hell, this:

(Slide 12 – (CS Lewis – “The doors of hell)



Some people do not want to change, and do not want to repent, and thus whether they want to be in hell or not, they will never change. This is why there is a hell, and this why CS Lewis said, “The doors of hell are locked from the inside!”

To bring this all of this together then, God calls to be cheerful givers. As God has blessed us, may we richly bless others. We do this through financial giving, giving time, volunteering, giving away things that we do not need, donating extra food to the food pantry, giving away clothes that we will never wear, etc.

Whatever it is, we should be “Thankful” that God has blessed us, and we honor God and show our faith in God by “Giving Away” as measure of our Thankfulness.

So once again then, how does this all apply to our daily lives? Let us look:

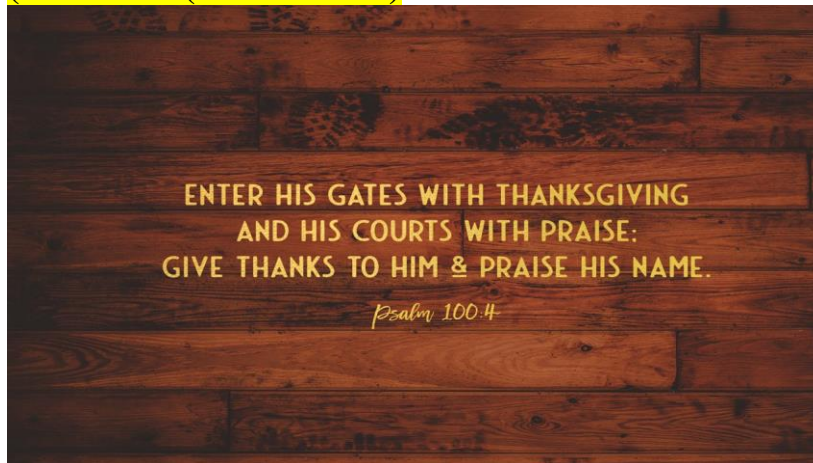
(Slide 13 – (“Application To Our Lives”))



In this season of “Thankfulness” and always, let us seek to “Give Away” all we can, as God has given us all so much!

As I call the Praise Team forward, We have been using a slide to close this sermon series from Psalm 100:4, and here is that slide.

(Slide 14 – (Psalm 100:4))



On this day and always, may be thankful for all that God has given us, and may be generous so others can receive “Thankfulness,” and “Gratitude” from us. Our closing slide is a slide that says, “God Bless Have A Great Week”

Slide 15 – (God Bless Have A Great Week)



May we continue to be thankful, now, and always. Amen.