

**Sermon Notes – September 28, 2025**  
**The Holy Gospel of St. Luke 16: 19-31**  
**Peace Lutheran Church**  
**“An Essential Component”**

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus functions as a vivid culmination of Luke's prophetic warnings against the accumulation of wealth in a world where, at the same time, there is need around us. After this week, the emphasis shifts away from wealth and poverty themes, so this week may well be the time to address these matters with sustained attention, especially if they haven't been fully engaged homiletically (in a sermon) in the previous weeks. If we preachers seek scriptural justification for delivering a message about wealth and poverty or for avoiding the possibility of doing so, both are surely in abundance this week across all the readings.

Like the previous week, Amos's text is an unwavering and fiercely direct warning to the rich and comfortable, and is followed in the psalms by jubilant expansive praise of God, who returns the powerful to the dust “when their breath departs” (Ps. 146: 4), “executes justice for the oppressed [and] gives food to the hungry” (v. 7), and “upholds the orphan and the widow” (v. 9).

There are many today who work diligently to share their many gifts with others. There are still others who choose instead to seek wealth for themselves. While I am truly blessed to see and know individuals who help in our community and beyond in so many ways, this trait in Biblical times was indeed a rarity.

The text from I Timothy combines strongly worded warnings to the rich about the dangers of wealth with the promises of “...God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment” (6: 17), and an urging for us to “take hold of the life that really is life” (6: 19). The critique of wealth here is not advocacy for anxious penny pinching, but rather an invitation into abundant life.

The gospel text is centered in the great economic and existential reversal that occurs between impoverished and hungry Lazarus, and the rich and overfed man. But before we hear the great reversal among the characters in the parable, the appointed acclamation introduces the gospel by singing of the great reversal in the incarnation and ministry of Christ: “You know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (2 Cor. 8: 9).

While sometimes American political discourse blames the chasm between rich and poor on “both sides,” that is certainly not the characterization that Luke's gospel offers. As voices in the parable ring out from “both sides” of the chasm, Luke's hope is for them to be joined in a saccharine duet, so that they - along with us - might join the song of the Magnificat, praising the One who has

“brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly” and  
“filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty” (Luke 1: 52-  
53.