

THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

THE LESSON: LUKE 16

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord”

- Revelation 14:13

When we speak of “the faithful departed” we are talking about believers who have died in the faith. This saintly group spans continents and centuries, and it is a group which today’s believers anticipate one day joining. The Prayer Book’s burial service celebrates the great company of saints that have gone before, the hope of the resurrection, and eternal life in heaven, *because it is a burial service for believers*. Physical death “has different significance for the believer and the unbeliever” (Erickson, *Christian Theology*). So, understanding the solemnity of these things, we pray, “Make thy servants to be numbered with the saints in glory everlasting” (BCP p. 598).

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Jesus told many parables. These were relatable stories that revealed truth about God and his kingdom. The parables were often told in response to a question or a situation that was unfolding on the spot. The parable we’re about to look at today was told in the hearing of Jesus’ disciples as well as the Pharisees. The Pharisees were rich, powerful and strictly religious. They were not known for their compassion, and Jesus was often compelled to point out their hypocrisy. Jesus had come “to call sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32), rather than to congratulate those who (mistakenly) believed they had nothing to repent of. Today’s parable invites us to consider who truly belongs in the company of the saints.

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON’T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON’T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

If today’s reading left you aware of a need to confess, take time to do that. Rest assured that “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Then, take some time to thank God for the example of those believers who went before us. Ask him to help you to live in such a way that a faithful example is left for those who come after. Close your time with the following prayer:

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who hast opened unto us the gate of everlasting life, and art the peace and light of those who rest in thee: In company with thy holy Apostles, Prophets, and Martyrs, and with all the faithful departed, we praise and glorify thee for the fulness of joy which thou givest to all who put their trust in thee; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

(FROM THE ORDER FOR THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD, BCP PAGE 599)

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LUKE 16: **GOD KNOWS YOUR HEART**

¹⁵And Jesus said to the Pharisees, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God...

¹⁹“There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.

²⁰And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²²The poor man died and

was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried, ²³and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. ²⁴And he called out, ‘Father

Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ ²⁵But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.

²⁶And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not do so, and none may cross from there to us.’ ²⁷And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house— ²⁸for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ ²⁹But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ ³⁰And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ ³¹He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”