

## Next Services

**Saturday  
November 11th**

**Great Vespers at 5:00 pm**

**Sunday  
November 12th**

**Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am**

**both at**

**St. Olympia Chapel  
123 Main Street  
Potsdam, NY**

**All welcome!**

**Establishing a Connection:  
Journeying With  
Your Patron Saint**

**St. Olympia**

**St. Basil**

**St. Nicholas**

**St. John the Baptist**

**St. George**

**St. Demetrius**

**St. Andrew**

**St. Peter**

**St. Paul**

**St. James**

**St. Philip**

**St. Bartholomew**

**St. Matthew**

**St. Mark**

**St. Luke**

**St. Ignace**

**St. Francis**

**St. Rose**

**St. Elizabeth**

**St. Anne**

**St. Barbara**

**St. Agatha**

**St. Cecilia**

**St. Lucy**

**St. Agnes**

**St. Theresita**

**St. Kateri**

**St. Brigid**

**St. Bridget**

**St. Margaret**

**St. Catherine**

**St. Barbara**

**St. Ursula**



**ST OLYMPIA ORTHODOX CHURCH**

POTSDAM, NEW YORK 13676

ORTHODOX CHURCH OF AMERICA  
DIOCESE OF NY AND NJ



**Welcome to St. Olympia Orthodox Church,  
a young and, God willing, growing community of worshippers.**

**Join us for prayer and fellowship.**

**Divine Liturgies are held every Sunday and are primarily in English.**

**Fr. Luke Majoros is our presbyter.**

## The Rich Man and Lazarus

*Note: the following article has been written by an anonymous contributor.*

*It is included here by permission.*

There's a tendency to consider the subject of money somehow "unspiritual." But in today's Gospel, Luke 16:19-31, our Lord tells us the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, which is very much a story about money, about what you and I do with our money, and about our attention or lack of it paid to the poorest in our society, because the fates of the parable's two main characters are very much tied to their experiences and use of wealth and poverty in this life.

Now, in our Lord's story, the rich man has no name, while the poor man, Lazarus, is the only character in our Lord's parables to have a name. The rich man has no name because he's just like every other rich guy whose life is given over to the pursuit of wealth, the hoarding of wealth, and/or the spending of wealth on "the good life." Psalm 49:6 says "those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches," and who think "their houses will last forever, their dwelling places to all generations," are "fools," because "when he dies he shall carry nothing away" and will have lived a wasted life. The poor man has a name: Lazarus, meaning "God has helped." If the rich man is a stock character, the poor man is special, because instead of envying the rich man or cursing God for his poverty and sickness or just sitting in a corner feeling sorry for himself, he relies upon God to be his help.

Next, our Lord sketches the situation of each man in this life. The rich man "was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day." Purple dye was ridiculously expensive; yet this man had robes made of the stuff. And "fine linen" was delicate and airy, perfect for a hot climate and a lot more costly than the cotton poor folks wore. Further, he "fared sumptuously every day." This guy could have had the finest cook in the land and enjoyed the best and rarest foods; every day was a banquet. And note that in those days, instead of wiping their hands and fingers with napkins, they used hunks of bread,

which they then threw on the floor. This guy was filthy rich, loved showing off how rich he was, and never gave even a single thought to the poor and sick man who lay at his doorstep begging for even a little bit of that bread from the floor. If the rich man noticed Lazarus at all, he just took it that that's just how life was...and was supposed to be.

"But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs [the scraps] from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores." Now notice how Jesus says Lazarus "was laid at his gate;" every day somebody carried the poor man to the rich man's doorstep and left him there. It may have been a relative who didn't want to be bothered with another mouth to feed who brought in no money; or it could've been other beggars who couldn't help Lazarus themselves but hoped the rich man would. But there was Lazarus, longing to fill his empty belly with table scraps but totally ignored by everyone but the neighbourhood dogs, who licked his sores. And maybe it's wishful thinking, but I like to think the dogs licked his sores to do their best to relieving his suffering, doing for him what they'd do for their own pups. If so, the dogs showed Lazarus greater pity and greater care than the humans.

But a drastic reversal happens after these two men die. The rich man, who, in his lifetime, ostentatiously displayed his wealth with beautiful clothes and lavish feasts, finds himself in Hades, a place of torment and eternal punishment. Conversely, Lazarus, hungry, sick, diseased, and with only dogs to lick his sores, is carried away to an honoured place beside Abraham, God's friend and the father of God's people, Israel. A conversation ensues between the rich man and Abraham. With unconscious irony, the rich man, who never gave Lazarus a single scrap of bread from his floor, asks Abraham to send Lazarus to "dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue" with but a single drop of water to ease his pain. It's still all about him, isn't it? Lazarus still isn't a person to be respected, but a tool to be used. And right there we see why the torment in Hades is eternal: because the attitudes that land a person there remain unchanged, unrepented. In any case, Abraham responds that "besides all this, there is a between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us." And the nature of that gulf, that chasm, is again love of neighbour or the lack of it. Could the blessed reach out in love to the damned? Perhaps. But would the damned respond to it with love or, as the rich man does here, with an attitude of self-centered entitlement?

Now the rich man, still expecting some sort of special treatment, begs Abraham again to send Lazarus to warn his five brothers about Hades, "lest they also come to this place of torment." Abraham replies that they already have Moses and the prophets to warn them. Remember: when in Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus says, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." He's not saying anything new; He's quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, to people who were supposed to know the Scriptures. His purpose, He says in Matthew 5:17, is not "to destroy the Law or the Prophets" but "to fulfill," to bring out their full meaning and application. And the point is that the five brothers had all learned to read the Scriptures and had heard them read aloud every Sabbath; so they already knew the right thing to do. The rich man argues back that "if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent." But Abraham replies that if they've not listened to Moses and the prophets, they won't be convinced by someone being raised from the dead. And as the Gospels tell us, that's exactly what happened with the Pharisees and Sadducees when Jesus rose from the dead; they still refused to believe.

This parable was a shock to the Pharisees, who considered wealth to be a proof of a person's righteousness, and who considered sickness and poverty to be God's judgment on the unrighteous and sinner. And the story is still a shock to us North Americans, who consider wealth and health something we deserve, something to which we have a right. It's a shock to hear that my money isn't mine, but is lent to me by the Lord to meet the needs of others as much as to meet my own needs and fewer of my wants. It's a shock to hear a story linking agony or comfort in the next life to how we treat the less fortunate right in our face in this life. And it's a shock to learn that the chasm between Lazarus at Abraham's side and the rich man in Hades is unbridgeable; that the consequences of our choices are real and eternal.

The Gospels stress the way the status of the rich and the poor is reversed in the kingdom of God. When Jesus is conceived in Mary's womb, she exults that God "has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty." In His first sermon, Jesus declares that "the Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor;" and He admonishes His followers not just to invite to their parties the friends and neighbors who can repay them, but "the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind." This is echoed when Jesus describes the kingdom of God as a wedding banquet where the invitation has been extended to "the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind." Conversely, when the rich young ruler asks Jesus how he can inherit eternal life, he's told, "Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." And Jesus warns that "he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" is a fool who'll ultimately lose everything.

And mark you: being "rich toward God" and having "treasure in heaven" is not just about personal piety. It's also about me getting by with less, to help those who have nothing. And that makes the story of the rich man and Lazarus difficult for many of us North Americans, whose lifestyle stands in sharp contrast with a majority of people in the world, who live on much less. Like so much else that the Gospel says about money and possessions, it stands as a stinging indictment not only of the great confidence we place in financial security, but also of the drastic inequities between rich and poor we by simple inaction allow to be perpetuated. But in this story Jesus is telling us plainly that God's eternal judgment has everything to do with how we use wealth in this life and whether we attend to those less fortunate in our midst. Our temptation is to explain away a story like this and to remove its blatant depiction of how God will ultimately vindicate the cause of the poor. But the message has been clearly stated. Like the rich man's five brothers, we've been given all the warning we need.



## Potsdam Interfaith Thanksgiving Program

**Help us help those in need!**

This coming Sunday, Nov. 12th, is the last day to bring non-perishable goods such as cranberry sauce, stuffing mix, canned vegetables, canned fruit, etc. to church. Our parish is one of the contributing churches to the Potsdam Interfaith Thanksgiving Program, an annual project that provides boxed-to-go Thanksgiving meals for people who would be without. Our help is needed!

### Volunteers needed:

**Mon. Nov 13** – last day for collecting non-perishable food donations at St. Mary's

**Tue. Nov 14** – sorting, final counts of donations, and final decisions for number/size of baskets needed

**Wed. Nov 15** – based on donations received, packing lists for different basket sizes written; shopping as necessary for goods not donated in sufficient amounts)

**Thu. Nov 16** – at St. Mary's, arrange tables, set out signs and boxes

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