

Westminster Presbyterian Church
Des Moines, Iowa

September 29, 2019
Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16; Luke 16:19-31

“Eyes to See”

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That rich man was a piece of work. He had everything in his life except compassion. He could eat scrumptiously every day; but, as was the rule in ancient times, those who were wealthy took the scraps, took them out, and offered them to those who were begging. But, apparently, not this man. But, not even that was good enough for Lazarus, lying there with his open sores. The man was so horrifyingly cruel that he couldn't see. Now, if he had to walk past Lazarus every day, it took effort *not* to see. You had to walk around intentionally, day after day, [and] look away to not see Lazarus. Meanwhile, all Lazarus could see was all of that money – all of that fine linen that he wore around himself – imagining, from the outside, what it must have been like to eat at the rich man's table, right up until the moment that he died..

It was so frustrating. Then they get into Heaven and – isn't it interesting – that there is this vast expanse between God's heavenly kingdom, where Lazarus is, and how far down it is to get to the rich man; and, here is the rich man crying out to Abraham for help, and still trying to boss around Lazarus. The rich man says, “Please have Lazarus dip his finger in and give me water.” Even when he is in hell, he still sits there thinking that the man on earth would wait on him, hand and foot. He is still in the depths of Hades and he didn't get it. Then, when Abraham verbally slapped him in the face and said, “No.” He tries it again. He didn't say, “Would you go? Or, send the Messiah. Or, send God.” He said, “Send Lazarus,” who, for the second time, has tried to treat him like a slave. “Send Lazarus to go talk to my brother.” And, again, Abraham slapped him verbally across the face and said, “No. It is too late.”

And he argues with him again, and Abraham says again, “If they won't believe Abraham and the Prophet...” And, here is what is telling: Even if he died he won't get it. He won't get it. How incredibly sad that even in Hades, the rich man didn't see his circumstances; didn't see how they had made the switch, because of his cruelty and Lazarus' suffering.

Now, you may think, hey, that is a 2,000-year-old story. That doesn't fit today; and, if that is the case, then I ask you to think about Felicity Huffman for just a moment. That poor woman had everything. She had an Emmy. She had wealth. She had “Desperate Housewives.” She had everything you could imagine. She has a husband, who is also an Emmy-award winner – was nominated for an Academy award. They have money. They have fame and fortune. And now, she also has a felony.

And, how strange that nothing for her was quite enough. That she had to go to the point of spending fraudulently \$15,000, to have someone cheat and correct her daughter's SAT score so that she could get a big enough score to get into just the right school.

Now, think about that just for a moment. They have everything. If Felicity Huffman's daughter got a lower score, or a proper score on her SAT score, if she got that score, would she become homeless? Probably not.

If she got a score that was normal for her, would she end up ruining her life? No. What if she got the SAT score that she deserved. Would she be viewed by her parents as a slacker? Maybe. If she got the SAT score that she deserved, would her parents be embarrassed in talking to their friends and neighbors? More than likely.

What does that say about her daughter? How do they see her? I think about what life must have been like around the dinner table. All the time: "How come you're not stepping up? You're not working hard enough. How come you don't test better? How come you aren't this? How come you aren't that?"

It had to have happened, because it had to drive Felicity Huffman to such a place that she had to go to such an extreme, as to commit a felony – and you know it didn't happen out of nowhere, in a vacuum. She must have been pressuring her daughter to live up to the standards that Felicity set. And you wonder, how did she see her daughter? And then you wonder, how did the daughter see herself? How could she see herself as anything but somehow unworthy, unacceptable; see herself as humiliated and, even worse, to see herself as humiliating. And not just in her own family, but to the world – because it is in every paper, every magazine, everywhere. We need to be praying for that poor girl.

You think that one is bad. Let's talk about Lori Loughlin for a moment. At least Felicity Huffman, at some point in time, was able to see that she really screwed up, so she pleads guilty. God bless her! From day one – the minute she was caught – she said, "I did it. I apologize. I throw myself on the mercy of the court." And, she still got 14 days in jail and is a felon for the rest of her life.

But look at Lori Loughlin and her very famous husband, who is a designer. They have two children – so it is twice the penalty. But, instead of \$15,000, to pay off someone to correct the SAT score, Lori Loughlin goes so far as to bribe college coaches at the University of Southern California to the tune of \$500,000. Now, that is a big, old mistake from where I come from. \$500,000.

These two girls, supposedly, were going to be on the USC rowing team, and they had never been on a rowing team in their lives. Now, all of a sudden, instead of Felicity Huffman, you know the story...

Lori Loughlin said, "I'm not guilty." So, now they have added it up, as everyone else starts pleading guilty. Everyone else pleads guilty. Everyone else is getting jail time. Now, Lori Loughlin and her husband are looking at the potential of 40 years behind bars, because they didn't see; they didn't see the impact it was going to have on others. Perhaps some other deserving person was not going to be able to go to college, because they were not going to have that scholarship. They didn't see that someone else might not get to fulfill their dream, to row at one of the finest schools in the country. They didn't see if, even more so, what they were doing

to their own daughters. They didn't see that they were not giving their children – their two girls – the opportunity to feel the pride in a job well done. They didn't see that their daughters were going to miss out on the opportunity to be able to look back on their lives and say, “*We* did this. *We* pulled ourselves up. *We* earned the life we've made.” For the rest of their lives, if it had turned out the way they had hoped, mom and dad would have cleared the road, bribed everybody, and at some point in time, they would look back on their life and see that they hadn't earned any of it – and that is probably the worst sin of all.

I hope. I hope that Felicity Huffman, and even more so, for Lori Loughlin because she hasn't yet said she is sorry, or that she is guilty, that she and her husband look and say, “I did it;” because if they don't, I worry that, like the story of the Rich Man, they are going to feel such emptiness that they have lived their lives and, when their life on this earth is over, that it had all been a sham.

Like I told the children, it seems silly when you put your socks on the outside of your shoes, or you put the toothpaste on the toothbrush, after you have brushed; but, that is how so many people live their lives, with their money and their power. You care for your children. You raise them up so that they can make their own healthy decisions, so that they can make their way. They can learn from their mistakes. They can struggle and improve, and take pride in what they have done.

But when people are always tripping ahead of their children, smoothing the path; they end up never having the opportunity of saying, “Look what I did.” The most they will ever get to say is, “Look at what mom and dad did,” and all of that money will mean nothing to them. All of that fame and all of that fortune turns to nothing, in that moment – the same way it turned to nothing for the Rich Man.

Our prayer is that we will get the order right. That we see the people that God is placing before us; that we will see that God has given us an abundance – some more than others – but all of us have an abundance in this room to give something back. That is what I was trying to get to the children. Every one of them had a quarter, and one or two might still have a quarter [laughter], but they have other things at home, and to see that there are people who go to CROSS Ministries who have nothing, and, in a couple of days they won't remember they even had a quarter, but CROSS will be richer, and the people who go there will be richer, for the gift that those kids gave.

It isn't the one quarter that makes the difference, but it's the 40 quarters that turn into \$10 bucks that starts making a difference, and it's when all of us, giving our little bit, offering to see need – and giving it together – that makes a phenomenal powerful difference in this world. It allows us to see, not only the pain in this world, but that we can make a difference.

That is what we do at Westminster. That's what we do as people of faith – to offer God to this world. Let's be on the right side of this. Thank God we are not Lazarus! But, let's not be the Rich Man. And, may we never be haughty and may we continue to pray for those, like Felicity Huffman, Lori Loughlin and their families; because there, but by the grace of God, go each one of us. We all love our children and we want the best; but, may we see what the best really means.

We offer that in Jesus name. Amen