

September 21, 2025

Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost

“Delusion and Truth”

Luke 16:1-15

A couple weeks ago Charlie Kirk was assassinated. I didn't really follow Charlie, but I'm pretty sure I'm rather on the same page with his worldview and politics. I would say that Charlie Kirk spoke the truth. It seems increasingly evident that his assassin killed him for speaking truth while the assassin believed a lie.

Men are men; they can't become women and vice versa. That's truth, biblical and biological. But many folks living under a delusion so disagree with that truth they react against it with denial, antagonism, vitriol and sometimes violence. And while we LCMS Christians will wholeheartedly reject that lie, we should not think ourselves above this kind of thinking. We can be delusional to the extreme as well.

We have Jesus' bizarre parable before us today and, like most of His parables, it's over the top and its characters don't behave as folks normally would in real life. The manager would have been fired immediately and he certainly wouldn't be commended by the rich man after slashing what the debtors owed. But when you look through that to the point of the story, it reveals a truth that is tough to swallow: You own nothing; none of what you have belongs to you; you are just the manager and if you're wise, you'll manage what has been entrusted to you with an eye toward the eternal dwellings. This is truth.

We deny this. From our earliest years of childhood, we develop an understanding of what belongs to us and if it's taken from us, we throw a tantrum. Anyone who has dealt with a small child for any length of time observes this. We don't lose this attitude as we get older, we stop throwing the tantrums and guard our stuff better.

And here we find ourselves today with all of our stuff. We have 401Ks, investments, real estate, nice vehicles, nice clothes, nice food, nice toys. And we not only think these things are ours, but we think we deserve them. I mean, we did pay for them with OUR cash after all. And very often we think that we'd really like to be having just a little bit more, you know, to be living the good life.

And I'm not preaching against greed today. I could, but the parable about that rich guy building bigger barns and next week we have the one about the rich guy and poor Lazarus at his gate for that. I want to address our attitude toward the stuff of this life and how we believe a lie instead of the truth.

What is “the good life”? I bet every single one of us has some dreamy image of what that is. Maybe it's having a nice camp down the bayou with a nice boat whose outboard motor never acts up and plenty of time to take it out fishing, not to mention plenty of cash to keep it fueled up. Maybe the good life for you is to simply be healthy and enjoy good times with the kids, grandkids, great grandkids with everybody getting along, and of course no money worries to spoil it all. Maybe it is to be successful in business and community and have the admiration of others. Maybe the good life for you is just the generic, “I want to be happy.” We look around this world and we want it to be arranged in some way, shape or form the brings us this “good life” here.

But that's really our delusion; thinking we can have the “good life” here; thinking that material stuff, professional success, happy relationships, vibrant health, an overflowing bank account or whatever of this world can make everything wonderful. It can't. We're undeservedly blessed with wonderful times of happiness and contentment and we pray to God for those and thank Him when He so blesses us, but this managership ends. This life ends, usually sooner than we'd like. And unless your very lucky, the

road to that end typically has its share of disappointments, pain, sorrow and suffering. The reality of this world broken by sin is that it simply is not a “good life.”

We don’t like hearing that. Our fallen nature rails against that. But insisting on believing and living otherwise is as delusional as saying a man can be a woman. Reality is reality and we see it around us every day. Lots of folks would have said Charlie Kirk had the good life—fame, fortune, a wonderful family—evil death brought it to an end. It’s sad and tragic, but it is indeed the truth of this existence.

But seeing the fallen world for what it is, leaving the delusion and seeing the truth is freeing; it is liberating; it’s good news. *“The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.”*

Again we have Jesus with a difficult teaching, but a wonderful invitation wrapped within. He says you own nothing, but you have been entrusted the management of your blessings by God above as a son or daughter of light! You have been enabled by His Holy Spirit to manage the things of this world and your life within it to His glory, and ultimately to your own place within that glory! The invitation is to embrace the truth that all belongs to God...especially you! You were purchased at the cross; you are not your own; you were bought at a price. And though all the stuff of this life does inevitably fail, Christ has not. Christ does not. He endures forever as does your life in Him.

Like I said, I don’t know a whole lot about Charlie Kirk, but from all evidence I’ve seen he was a Christian and a vocal one at that. I ask you, what loss has he suffered? None. True, all his earthly wealth is gone, his fame will fade, his loving family is left behind (but I pray will join him again one day). The delusion of that assassin is that he ended Charlie Kirk’s life. But Charlie has gained eternity with Christ. If there has been any loss it was only that which was always temporary and tainted by sin. He has gained the kingdom with Christ eternal—the truly “good life”. That’s the truth!

I cannot sugarcoat the toughness of this truth and it is indeed tough for us to accept. Our fallen spiritual DNA is programmed to love the stuff of this world and it is what is in front of our eyes every day, tempting us to see it as of first importance and primacy. But it is a broken, fallen world unfit for the presence of God. *“For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”* Jesus words.

Unfortunately, I think we all fall into that abominable delusion time and time again. We swallow the world’s lie and worship the creation instead of the Creator. But the Word of truth comes to us again and again—Christ crucified and risen that you may return to Him in repentance and have that abomination removed in the forgiveness of sins—replaced with the truth of His righteousness for you.

So if there is one phrase I want to stick in your head from this sermon, let it be this: delusion and truth. When you are moved to joy because you have or sadness because you don’t have a nice house, or a camp with a boat, a healthy body, a harmonious family, a full stomach, a nice car, nice clothes, nice toys, a full bank account—in other words the “good life” here. Remind yourself, the “good life” here is the delusion. This place, this stuff, this life is broken and it will remain broken until it is no more. The truth is that you are God’s child here, in this broken life, managing all of it for Him, in His service, to His glory, as you look forward to, and already have one foot in, the eternal dwellings.

You are baptized into Christ Jesus. The eternal gifts are already yours. See through the delusion of the world’s grandeur to the truth of God. You can’t take it with you...and you don’t really want to. It’s cursed by sin, an abomination to God. Your life, “the good life,” is in Christ today and forever. Knowing this, manage the things He has entrusted you to the glory of He who has made this truth, your truth.

Amen.