I must have to admit that I am a bit of an eighteenth century nerd. Melissa tells me that I was born about 200 years too late. I enjoy studying the American Revolution and the culture that was prevalent at that time. When I was a child I really liked the song Yankee Doodle, and sang it a lot, but never really understood what was about until I visited Colonial Williamsburg and found out what the words Dandy and Macaroni were all about.

In the 18th century dandies were men who dressed in fine clothes who were unduly devoted to style, neatness, and fashion in all their dress and appearance. They wore all the latest fashions, the finest clothes; they wanted to be seen. When something was of the latest fashion, when it was considered to be “in” it was called Macaroni. These Dandies wanted to be recognized for their style and wealth. They wanted the power it gave them around town. To spend their money lavishly, to be recognized as wealthy by their finest of fashion. They wanted to appear important. They wanted to set themselves apart from the common people in their midst; they wanted to establish the clear distinction between themselves and the common man.

The Song Yankee Doodle was a satire on this aspect of English culture. A culture that was more concerned with their own wealth and power and greed and ignored the immediate needs of those of the common classes. You have heard the words of the song:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Yankee Doodle went to town} \\
\text{A-riding on a pony} \\
\text{He stuck a feather in his hat} \\
\text{And called it macaroni.}
\end{align*}
\]

Dandies were only focused upon themselves, their own appearance and status in society; they pursued riches for their own vain glory and comfort and ignored those in need around them. They were pompous, arrogant, and proud. That is why Yankee Doodle resonated so with the American people of the eighteenth century. It made fun of the English culture and its lack of connection with the reality of life and the state of the common man.
Exegesis of Gospel

Our Gospel reading today has such a character in it, a rich man who was disconnected to those around him; the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The rich man dressed himself in the finest of clothes, purple cloth and fine linen, clothes that speaks of royalty and power. He lived in luxury, dined sumptuously every day. He was proud of himself, what he had achieved, his ability to provide for himself the finest of clothes and all the pleasures of life; and his ability to avoid all the unpleasantness that existed just outside his door.

Yes the rich man was very rich, he was very well dressed, he was isolated from the pain and suffering in the world and even just outside his front door, for the rich man’s neighbor was a beggar named Lazarus.

Lazarus had nothing but rags and hunger. He knew of the rich man’s wealth, and even of the food upon his table. He longed for the gulf, the social divide to be removed from between him and the rich man. Like a dog, he longed to eat the crumbs from the rich man’s table that fell on the floor. As the rich man reclined at his sumptuous table, Lazarus literally had been thrown before the rich man’s gate. The passive verb here in the Greek implies that he did not get there by his own power, and probably infers that he could no longer leave.

Dogs came and licked his sores. It is amazing that this is included. Dogs to this day are not considered pets in the Middle East. They are partially wild; they live outside of good and polite society. Good people do not let dogs into their house. They are to this day still considered unclean. Yet these unclean dogs were more aware of Lazarus sores, his poor condition, his desperate need, than the rich man. They licked his sores; something any dog owner today would know was a tender and caring thing. The Dog’s cared more for Lazarus than the rich man cared for him.

The Name Lazarus is significant as well. Although Lazarus is only a two dimensional character in this story, he is the only named character in any of Jesus’ parables. The two characters that speak
in this parable are the rich man and Abraham. Lazarus is passive in the whole story and says nothing. But his name is a Greek version of the Hebrew name Eleazar, which means God is my help, or he whom God helps. As if to say God helps the poor and lets the rich to help themselves. Yet there is a stark contrast in life between the rich man an the man God helps:

- The Rich man is clothed in purple and fine linen while Lazarus is covered with sores.
- The Rich man reclines at a fine table but Lazarus is thrown into the gutter.
- The rich man splendidly celebrates every day, while Lazarus desires to eat what falls from the table but can’t.
- The Rich man was isolated from the unpleasantness of common life while Lazarus becomes the focus of wild dogs.

In the afterlife their roles were reversed:

- Lazarus is carried away by the angels while the rich man is buried in the ground.
- Lazarus is brought to the bosom of Abraham while the rich man is sent to hades.
- Lazarus was at Abraham’s side, the imagery implied here and elsewhere in the gospels is of Lazarus sitting finally at the table of plenty, but the rich man suffered in torment for eternity with no hope of relief.

The rich man cries out to Abraham for help. But Abraham told the rich man: *Child, remember that you in your lifetime received [what you considered] your good things, and Lazarus in like manner [suffered] bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.*

Abraham tells the rich man that a chasm had been fixed between him and Lazarus. That which the rich man sought to achieve throughout his life, a permanent gap between himself and the poor and destitute Lazarus, was finally achieved. During his life the rich man never attempted to bridge the gap between his house and the poor Lazarus outside his gate. He could not reach across it
to give the starving Lazarus a bite to eat, or medicine for his sores, or shelter from the weather, or a set of unwanted clothes from his over full closet, fashions long out of style never to be worn again.

But now he wants the gap removed, twice he demands *Send me Lazarus!* Even in death, even in condemnation he still is arrogant. He thinks he can order Lazarus the beggar around. He who gave no mercy in life begs for mercy, he has become the beggar.

But Lazarus is no longer a beggar. He is a man helped by God. What the rich man has failed to do in life, God has done in eternity. Lazarus finally reclines with Abraham beside the table of the Lord, eating sumptuously.

- The Rich man had received good during his life, now was in torment.
- Lazarus had received evil during his life, now was comforted.

The rich man begs then to send Lazarus to his five brothers, convinced that if an apparition from the dead where to come they would be saved from the peril that he was now in. The rich man still arrogant, still ordering Lazarus to do his bidding, yet finally thinking of someone else other than himself. The rich man assumed that the sending of Lazarus would be effective in saving his five brothers. Abraham reminds the rich man that they have Moses and the Prophets... let them hear them. As if to say God has already provided a way for their repentance and salvation... let them hear the scriptures! But the rich man in his arrogance argues and pleads with Abraham, he said, *No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.* Abraham replied: *If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.*

Jesus teaches us through this parable that scripture is more effective in bringing about repentance than an appearance of an apparition could ever be. Yet the rich in worldly wealth will not even be convinced even if someone would rise from the dead.
Who do you identify with in this parable?

Just like in every parable we can find a character that are meant to identify with. Jesus speaks to us from the mouth of Abraham; we are not meant to identify with him. We are not meant to identify with Lazarus either; we are not even supposed to see ourselves as the rich man. We are the rich man's five brothers who have still yet the opportunity to repent. Christ gives us artfully, through the parable a lesson about scripture, how effective it is for our repentance. We are called to turn from the temptation of our wealth and seek our riches only in God.

Teaching of 1 Timothy 6

9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. (Self Harm)

11 But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.

17 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. 18 They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. [Eternal Life]

We are the wealthy, we are the wealthy five brothers, and we have an opportunity in this life to give to those in need. But we live an isolated life. There is a chasm between us and those who are in need. We need to take the time to find out who are neighbors are. We need to find the ones who have been thrown down upon our front gate and feed them morsels from our tables, clothe them with
the fine linen from the unused contents of our closets. We all have them... trousers that don't fit, fine clothes that is out of style – macaroni from an age gone by.

- We can be exceedingly giving with our wealth and do good...
- And store up treasure in heave that will last forever.
- Who are your neighbors?
- Who is your Lazarus?

1st Saturday in month our congregation helps people out at Annapolis Light House Center for the homeless.

Failure

The truth is however we are so much like the five brothers of the rich man in our parable. We are no different from our brother who cried out to Abraham to send Lazarus to us so that we would repent.

- We want to be acknowledged as being important
- We want to be clothed in the finest of wears
- We all want to impress our friends, or a boss...
- To become an important person – to be somebody

Yet in the end, in the end of our lives - even with all our riches we are also like the Prodigal Son. All the wealth of this life is spent and there is nothing for us but hunger, sores, and tattered rags. If we rest upon the wealth of this life it will only leave us Homeless.... Christ calls us to repent and come home to him.

As the prodigal son went home to the father, Christ calls us to come home to him; he stretches out his arms and dresses us in the finest of Clothes, he bring us into his house and allows us at last to recline at his table next to Abraham.

Christ has already crossed over that great chasm. He came to us and warns us as the rich man asked. He even put on for us the purple robe shame, dressed with the finest of thorns as a crown and mocked in the street for us. He was even raised from the dead!

We stand in the place of the five brothers. Are now able to repent?