

## 4. The Rich Man & Lazarus

### Luke 16:19-31

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<sup>19</sup>“There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. <sup>20</sup>And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, <sup>21</sup>who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. <sup>22</sup>The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side.<sup>[a]</sup> The rich man also died and was buried, <sup>23</sup>and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. <sup>24</sup>And 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.’ <sup>25</sup>But 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. <sup>26</sup>And 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 be able, and none may cross from there to us.’ <sup>27</sup>And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— <sup>28</sup>for I have five brothers<sup>[b]</sup>—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ <sup>29</sup>But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ <sup>30</sup>And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ <sup>31</sup>He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

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#### 1. Read Luke 16:14 and discuss the context of the parable and to whom was this parable given.

**Luke 16:14** - <sup>14</sup>The Pharisees, **who were lovers of money**, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. <sup>15</sup>And he said to them, “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.

Jesus was speaking to the crowd, but specifically rebuking the Pharisees that were ridiculing Him. The Pharisees loved their money and their place in the government and social order. They were concerned not only with their status, but with what others thought of them.

In Luke 11:37-54 we learn a graphic description of the Pharisees. Jesus condemns them for their display of godliness but their inner souls are far from God.

**Luke 11:37-44** - <sup>37</sup>While Jesus<sup>[c]</sup> was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table. <sup>38</sup>The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. <sup>39</sup>And the Lord said to him, “**Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.** <sup>40</sup>You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? <sup>41</sup>But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.

<sup>42</sup> “But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. <sup>43</sup> Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. <sup>44</sup> Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it.”

The Pharisees were outwardly righteous, but inwardly they loved their money and they sought riches, success, and status more than they sought God. This is often the case with riches and pleasures on this earth – they tear us away from God and make it difficult for us to see the pleasures of sin for a season as the bait that brings us to eternal doom.

**Matthew 19:23-26** - <sup>23</sup> And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup> Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” <sup>25</sup> When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” <sup>26</sup> But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

This is one of the reasons that Jesus told His disciples that they must forsake all they had to follow Him. We too must be willing to lose all that we have to follow Christ.

**Luke 14:25-33** - <sup>25</sup> Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, <sup>26</sup> “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup> Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup> For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? <sup>29</sup> Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, <sup>30</sup> saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ <sup>31</sup> Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup> So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

- 2. Luke chapter 16 is largely a discussion on money. To see the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in the proper context we need to first look at the parable of the unjust manager in vs. 1-9. This manager realizes that he is losing his stewardship of the master’s possessions, so he uses the responsibilities given to him to secure a future for himself. What lessons can we learn about our handling money from the unjust manager?**

The dishonest [Unjust (KJV)] manager learned that he was going to lose his place and that his future was un-secure. He then used the resources that he was in charge of (The masters accounts receivable) to secure for himself a better place in the future. Jesus is not commending dishonesty, or cunning deceit, but is displaying the concept of using

your resources today for a better future. In the secular world, this is clearly seen in this parable, and in our normal planning and working for a future or retirement. Jesus comments on this in vs. 8b

**Luke 16:8b** - ...For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.

The heavenly meaning of this parable is that the “sons of light” are to use the resources that our master has given us today to store up rewards in heaven. Isn’t that the essence of Matthew 6:19

**Matthew 6:19-24** - <sup>19</sup>“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup>but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.” <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

<sup>22</sup>“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, <sup>23</sup>but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

<sup>24</sup>“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

3. **The parable of the Rich man and Lazarus does not discuss the hearts of the two characters who die, but the preceding verse (vs. 15) tells us that God sees the hearts. What can we surmise about the hearts of the two men based on their descriptions?**
  - a. **The Rich Man** – He enjoyed his riches. He lived lavishly, didn’t have a need for anything. Had a feast every day, and showed it off to those that surrounded him. He wore expensive clothes to show off his wealth. He enjoyed his wealth. He was a Jew, and likely relied on his status and lineage for his justification with God, but did not seem to notice the things of God in his life. Lazarus was a beggar at his doorstep, and he did not take compassion on him. **The rich man seemed to know Lazarus’ name – he knew exactly who this was, and still ignored him. He did not love his neighbor as himself, but enjoyed the riches that he had.** He was all wrapped up in himself, and did not see or bother with the needs all around him. *He either paid no thought to the things of God, or assumed that God was impressed with his worth and would allow him into*

*heaven because of his riches and wealth. (probably considered himself a “good” person)*

- b. Lazarus** – a poor man, with no food, or good clothes. He was nothing to look at, just a nuisance for the rich man. Hanging out at the front gate begging to be fed scraps – garbage really – from the rich man’s table. He was covered with sores and had no relief except for the licking of the dogs. He was looked down on and seemed insignificant and worthless. *He had nothing in this world, but was a son of the king and valued in Heaven. The angels of God came and got him when he died to bring him to Abraham’s side. He was in such need that he probably begged God each day for salvation.*

It is so often true that the rich and “good” struggle to see their poverty before God, and the poor and sinful easily see their need for a savior.

**Matthew 19:23-26** - <sup>23</sup> And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup> Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” <sup>25</sup> When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” <sup>26</sup> But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Sometimes I think that Satan is behind the wealth and comforts that we enjoy here in the U.S.A. I hear somebody (John Piper) once comment, “Jesus saves from the American Dream.”

#### **4. What can we assume the rich man, in torment, wanted to warn his 5 brothers about? What did they have to do to change their destiny?**

- That there was more to life than fine meals and clothes?
- That their riches do not matter in Heaven?
- That the pleasures of sin for a season were not worth eternal torment?
- That riches of this earth is not riches before God?
- That we cannot serve two masters?

**Luke 16:13** - <sup>13</sup> No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

Randy Alcorn, uses this phrase to describe riches and wealth – “You *can’t* take it with you... but you *can* send it on ahead!”

In Hebrews 11 Moses is listed as a good example of faith leading towards a future reward in Christ. Moses forsook his place as son of the king of Egypt choosing to suffer with the slaves of Egypt to receive the blessings of God.

**Hebrews 11:24-26** - <sup>24</sup> By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, <sup>25</sup> choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than

to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. <sup>26</sup> He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

**5. Abraham responds that they have Moses and the Prophets – let them hear them. What does this tell us about the saving power of the Old Testament? What would they likely hear in the Old Testament that would reprove them?**

The Bible tells us that All Scripture is profitable for training in righteousness. The theme of the Bible has not changed, and all scripture is the same message that God is holy, man is a sinner, and God has mercy on us and will forgive us if we repent and turn to Him.

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** - <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

If we go back as far as Adam and Eve we learn that they rebelled against God, but even then in the Garden God killed an animal and clothed them. God told the serpent that ultimately one from the line of men (Jesus) will bruise the head of the Serpent.

**Genesis 3:15** - I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

Moses is best remembered by the Jews as the one who gave the Law, and he did, but he also gave God’s commandments for the tabernacle and the sacrifices that covered the sins of the people.

**Exodus 32& 33 – The Golden Calf & Forgiveness**

In Exodus 32 we learn of the Golden Calf. Israel, fresh out of Egypt waited for Moses for 40 days, then turned to paganism and worshiped a representation of God in a sinful party. Moses came down the mountain and assembled the Levites and killed 3000 people, then God struck them with a plague and they were suffering and dying.

**Exodus 32:30** - <sup>30</sup> The next day Moses said to the people, “You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.”

The next day:

**Exodus 33:18-19** - <sup>18</sup> Moses said, “Please show me your glory.” <sup>19</sup> And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my

name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

**Jeremiah 9:23-24** - <sup>23</sup> Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, <sup>24</sup> but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD."

**6. Luke 16:31 is a sad commentary on the rejection of the Jewish people and their hardness of heart. In John 12:9-11, what was their response when somebody did rise from the dead?**

**John 12:9-11** - <sup>9</sup> When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus<sup>[a]</sup> was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup> So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, <sup>11</sup> because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

**The real Lazarus was raised from the dead and they wanted to kill him. The issue is not the proof of the miracles, but a matter of faith.**

**Application:**

God's economy is different than ours – Like all of the price tags are messed up.

**Matthew 5:1-11** - Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup> And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: <sup>3</sup> "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. <sup>5</sup> "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. <sup>6</sup> "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. <sup>7</sup> "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. <sup>8</sup> "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. <sup>9</sup> "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons<sup>[a]</sup> of God. <sup>10</sup> "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup> "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- What are some of the things in America today that people place their faith and trust in?
- What are the three most expensive things in my life today?
- What are the things, that if taken away, would be devastating to me?

- If God asked me to give up everything to follow him, would I do it?

Matthew 16:26 - <sup>26</sup>For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?