

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

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[0:00] You can be turning to Luke chapter 16. Luke 16. The passage that we're coming to today is one that as a child and a teenager and a young person, I looked at only as a picture of hell, which indeed it is.

But it's much more than that. It's a contrast. It's a good lesson for us to learn. Jesus has spoken in much of his ministry, but several times about how important it is for people to live for the kingdom of God, including that one thing that we don't like to hear people talk about, including the idea of how they should use their money and their means and their whole life for God.

Now, you might be saying, really? Jesus spoke plainly about it in Luke 6.38. He spoke plainly about it again in Luke chapter 12, verses 33 and 34.

We looked at it earlier in this chapter in Luke chapter 16, 1 to 13. We'll look at it again in Luke chapter 19. And we'll look at it another time in Luke chapter 21.

That's just Luke. And so, this is not something that Jesus just passed by. He dealt with it.

[1:57] And he instructed on it. Serving the Lord with what he has given us is not optional for the child of God.

But in every case, Jesus teaches that it is not only a proper response of a Christian, but that it brings great blessing and reward.

Sometimes in this life, but mostly in the next. So, as we come to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus today, Jesus will address the topic from the opposite side.

He's talked about this is what you should do. But we're going to see a man who lived for himself and tried to cover it up by justifying it before men when we look at the case of the man living for this world.

Let's read from Luke chapter 16, starting in verse 19. Luke chapter 16, verse 19.

[3:05] There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table.

Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side.

The rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

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.

But Abraham said, Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things and Lazarus in like manner bad things and now he is comforted here and you are in anguish.

[4:12] 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 to.

And none may cross from there to us. And he said, Then I beg you, Father, to send him to my father's house.

For I have five brothers so that he may warn them lest they also come to this place of torment. But Abraham said, But Abraham said, They have Moses and the prophets.

Let them hear them. And he said, No, Father Abraham. But if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent. He said to them, If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will it be, will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.

Let's pray together. Father, I thank you for this passage. Thank you for some of the things that it clears up in our mind. But I thank you, Father, mostly for the grace that's in this passage.

[5:24] I thank you for the fact that here is a parable that teaches us what everyone who lived like this man would love to scream at us.

And Lord, we're looking at the word of God. And Jesus in this parable says it's enough. So I pray that it would be enough today.

Not that it would lack. But Father, use it in us. That we would be people who hear that we need to be those who trust in Christ, who have entered the kingdom.

And that we who are in the kingdom have a responsibility to live for you. And to live for you by means of all of our lives as living sacrifice, as those who use everything for our Savior.

I pray that you would be with us. That you would open our eyes to your word and that you would grant grace. Be with me as I speak. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. So, Jesus has formulated this parable to illustrate the opposite side.

[6:35] The side of the person who doesn't decide to use his means for the Lord. He devises this parable and starts out by talking about this rich man who served money.

In the first part of this parable, we have what is simply called a rich man. You may have heard that in time people have called him dives. Dives is just a Latin word that means rich man.

So it really wasn't his name. So the rich man didn't have a name in the parable, but he simply called this rich man. And in verses 19-21, we see how he lives a little bit.

He has a lavish lifestyle. He dresses luxuriously. It says he's wearing purple.

Purple is the most expensive color that cloth could be dyed because it had to come from a form of a shellfish that was dried and ground.

[7:39] And it took many of these shellfish to create enough dye to dye a garment purple so that you would know it was purple.

And it was interesting. It came at a great cost. You ground it and dyed the cloth and the fish smell stayed with the cloth. It stunk. You smelled.

Now, everybody didn't mind it because you were wearing purple. And it showed that you had a lot of money and weren't afraid to spend it. And so the man lived luxuriously.

And he had these purple robes that he wore all the time. And then it says he feasted sumptuously every day.

Now, we feast on Thanksgiving. And we feast on Christmas. And we feast at other times.

Sometimes we feast on our birthdays. Sometimes we are guilty of feasting too much.

[8:39] But feasting is usually something that's a means of celebration. This man had the best of foods every day. And you can see that everything was about him.

I want to look the best. I want to eat the best. I want to enjoy the best. He was a man who lived in luxury. He had what the Bible speaks of as a lavish lifestyle.

But he didn't just have a lavish lifestyle. There are some who have lavish lifestyles and spread it all around. Our prodigal son that we looked at a few weeks ago.

He was kind of like that. He had a lavish lifestyle, but he spread it all over the place. It didn't mean he was saved. He meant he was foolish for the way he spent his money.

But this man had a lavish lifestyle, but he had a selfish lifestyle. And that's where we begin to see this as the contrast that's laid here.

[9:43] Jesus talks about this rich man in the house, wearing purple, eating this great food all the time. And then Jesus talks about this beggar who's laid at the gate.

He's laid at the gate. Apparently he cannot walk. He has to be placed there. He apparently has no means of working. It says that he's covered with sores. Maybe this is the reason he cannot work.

He cannot work. But he cannot move and he cannot work. So he's laid at the gate. And as he's laid there, the intention was, I want this guy to give me his scraps.

I don't need a fresh turkey out of the oven. I don't mind picking the bones. Is the contrast that's here. And so, Lazarus was laid at the gate.

And every indication is that there were no bones that came. There were no scraps that came. There was every indication that even though his body was covered with sores, that this rich man had any.

[10:54] He was not like the good Samaritan who saw someone in need and put him on his own mule and took him to the inn and poured in oil and wine into his wounds and treated his wounds and kept him for a couple days and then gave the innkeeper money to be able to take care of him while he was gone and he would pay the rest of them.

No, there was none of that. There was, in fact, what seemed to be the total opposite. Sores all over his body, but the rich man did nothing about it.

Probably his clothes were at best stained if they existed at all. He had sores all over his body and we know that those sores drew the dogs, whether they were family dogs or wild dogs.

I've heard conjectures all over the place. It doesn't matter. His sores drew dogs. And if they licked his sores, then at least some of those sores would have to be uncovered or oozed through the material that he wore.

And there Lazarus lay with what appears to be not one word from the rich man.

[12 : 11] And Jesus is setting up this contrast that this rich man had a beggar who was in extreme need at his gate. He lived lavishly and they didn't come together.

And of course, it would have had to been the rich man who made the move and he didn't. And so, Jesus goes on in his parable to talk about how the outcome of the way they lived showed their heart.

And so, it talks about how the outcome of the rich man is contrasted with that which would happen to Lazarus.

When Lazarus dies, he says he's carried to Abraham's side. Now, there's no talk of a funeral. He was a beggar.

So, he was probably thrown in the Valley of Hinnom on the dump and allowed to rot. We don't know. That's just conjecture. But it's just a parable. The idea is nobody thought.

[13 : 23] Nobody cared. Nothing happened. This rich man did nothing. He didn't even pay for a pauper's grave. He just died. It says he was carried by the angels to Abraham's side.

Now, I grew up with the King James and it says he was carried to Abraham's bosom. And as a kid, I'm like, what's this all about?

And now, the ESV says he was carried to his side. And some other translations have some other things. What's going on here is Lazarus was carried to a place of comfort.

He was brought to a place where he would be comforted.

Just make sure I knew I put it in here. Maybe I thought I'd put it here. But let me just explain it here.

What happened was when someone was invited to a banquet, there were the places of honor.

[14 : 27] We already talked about this at one point in the book of Luke. There was one place of great honor. And that was where you were put at a spot beside the person who was having the banquet.

And they were all laying on their left side. And so, in order for you as the guest of honor to talk to the person who was holding the banquet, you on your left side would have to lean over and nearly place your head on the chest of the head of the banquet.

It was a place of honor. It was something that happened. It was spoken of in John 13, verse 25, and John 21, verse 20.

It was spoken of concerning John, the disciple that Jesus loved, who leaned upon his breast. And it's that idea of he wasn't just this kid who would lay around and lay his head on.

In a banquet, he was sitting next to Jesus, reclining next to Jesus. And he had this place of honor.

And to talk with Jesus. It was a place of comfort. And so, as Lazarus dies, he's carried to Abraham's side.

[15 : 45] Now, there's such an interesting thing here. I was talking with Mike about this. Mike's back there. I was talking with Mike about this this past week.

And growing up, there was this confusion amongst some of the people that I run with. Is rich man and Lazarus really a parable? Or is it a true story?

Somebody's named. And there was all kinds of arguments. Well, this is because it's a true story and it's not a parable. But it is indeed a parable. And I think Lazarus' name was mentioned two times, or one time, for two specific purposes.

And this is one of them. In this contrast, we know that the rich man's wicked. But we don't know anything about Lazarus.

But his name, Lazarus, means helped by God. And I think that's one of the two reasons that he is the only person in one of Jesus' parables.

[16 : 54] It's the only parable where anyone is named. And I think one reason is so that you see that this is a man who was helped by God, who was in a relationship with God, because now his end was in a situation where it showed that he was trusting God.

He is in this place of honor with those who trust Christ. He is in Abraham's bosom. He is at this banquet, honored and given rest. And so he's pictured as having a position of eternal blessing. So Lazarus dies. And he goes to Abraham's side. Well, the rich man dies. Now, he's rich. And as he dies, he's honored with a burial.

But the contrast between Lazarus and the rich man, no burial. Lazarus ends up in Abraham's bosom.

Burial. Now, there's no correlation going forward. It's just showing you this great contrast. The rich man died. He's buried. But he is instantly in hell.

[18:07] Though he lived a lavish, comfortable life, now he was in torment in flames that caused anguish.

His situation was permanent and inescapable. He was in a place with a gulf that no one could cross. He was there. And Abraham later says, no one can cross to you and none of you can come to us.

So he was in this situation that was inescapable. And his agony was so great that he pled for mercy.

And first he pleads for mercy for himself. And he cries out, Father Abraham. Now, that's important. Because all the Jews listening to this parable would have understood that this is a Jew, a child of God, by being a son of Abraham.

[19:10] That as this man cried out, he was declaring, I am an Israelite. Thinking that that got him some sort of standing. He pleads for mercy based on being a child of Abraham.

And he says at that point, send Lazarus. Isn't it interesting? Somebody in this position, who is in torment, has the gall to say, send Lazarus to me.

He treats Lazarus still as a servant. He shows this attitude that he's had all of his life. These people are beneath me. They should serve me. I am not there to serve them. I am not there to help them. He should serve me. He doesn't repent. You don't even hear him say, oh, Father Abraham, I see Lazarus there. I know I was terrible to him.

But can you ask if he would forgive me and do this? He doesn't. He has this hard and calloused attitude, send Lazarus. He still feels enough superiority to suggest that it would be all right for Lazarus to do whatever it took to get across that gulf.

[20:28] And approach the rich man in those flames that caused agony. That's all right. I don't care if he hurts.

And it's all right for Lazarus to do that for just one moment of relief from the torment of that fire. And notice he says, Father Abraham, send Lazarus.

Now, Lazarus means help by God. We saw that as a way pointing to this is one who trusted Christ. It's just a parable. We just we're just seeing what we can see from it.

But here's something that's pretty obvious. He doesn't say, Father Abraham, send that man that's beside you. I don't know him.

He knew Lazarus. He knew Lazarus had been sitting in his gate. He knew Lazarus was a beggar. He knew Lazarus wanted to give him food.

[21:37] He knew Lazarus was covered with sores. This man can't be excused by saying, I didn't know.

He knows him by name. So I think that's the second reason that Lazarus is given a name in this parable.

And the rich man desires but a fingertip of water to cool his tongue. Because his torment is so great that any amount, any moment of a measure of relief would be merciful.

Can you imagine the agony that you were so desperate for relief you're willing to have someone take their finger? I mean, that's gone already.

I hardly noticed it touch my tongue. But that's the agony that he faced. He wanted mercy. But there was no mercy for this rich man.

[22:41] Abraham addressed him as child. So he's recognizing that he is physically a son of Abraham, but that did him no good. Abraham didn't go, oh, child, I'm sorry.

Somewhere someone took a wrong turn. You ended up in the wrong place. You don't deserve what you're getting. He says, no, as an Israelite, you're in the right place.

And I think Jesus put this in this parable, this idea of calling out to Father Abraham and Abraham answering him as child. Some versions say my son.

I think he's been listening to and talking with the Pharisees. And I think he's got their attention at this moment. Because Jesus is saying, here is a Jew.

And the Jews thought that rich people were blessed by God. In a sense, they were. But they were saying that's proof that they were blessed by God. Well, not necessarily.

[23 : 49] It was proof that they were righteous. Jesus, no, not at all. And so Jesus has got their attention. Hey, child of God. Not child of God.

Child of Abraham. Being a child of Abraham didn't keep him from that torment. And so Jesus is teaching these people that no amount of trying to look like a servant of God will keep an unsaved person out of hell.

He doesn't say, oh, you're in the wrong place. Abraham continues, you received your good things in your life.

Unlike Lazarus. Now, Jesus is not saying that Lazarus earned his comfort. And the rich man did not.

Abraham is saying, and this is important. Abraham is saying that the rich man's life showed that he served money and himself, not God.

[24 : 55] Let me say that again. Abraham is saying that the rich man's life showed that he served money and himself, not God.

Just back a couple of verses. Luke 16, 13. No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or he'll be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and money. And that's the crux. That's one of the main things that Jesus is teaching in this parable.

He said other things. He's talked about the son of Abraham. He's talked about him being rich. He's talked about his clothes. He's talked about his food.

To get them to see he's talking about people that could be those Pharisees. He's getting their attention. And he's saying that your money, serving yourself and your money and not God, shows what's really in your heart.

[26 : 04] And whether in the parable for sure this rich man got it or not, he gave up trying to get mercy for himself. And he at that point began to plead for mercy for his brothers.

He says, I have five brothers. And then again, he says, send Lazarus. Who would want to come back from that situation? But he says, send Lazarus to my brothers, lest they come to this place of torment.

And he's still treating Lazarus like a servant. But Abraham says, let them hear Moses and the prophets. Now Moses and the prophets, it's how they referred to the whole of the Old Testament at that time.

Abraham is saying, they have the word of God. Let them hear that. And the rich man is putting through his mind these thoughts.

I had the word of God. I didn't hear it. I ended up here. No, Father Abraham, we need something more. We need something more dramatic.

[27 : 15] Let's send someone from the dead. Send Lazarus. Send him right to my brother's house. Hey, you remember I laid at your brother's house at the gate. I died. Your brother sends me to warn you to listen to the word of God.

The rich man knew that he had not paid attention to the word of God. It's almost like he's blaming God. Yeah, I know you gave me your word.

Yeah, I know you gave me your word, but it wasn't loud enough. I know you gave me your word, but it wasn't plain enough. I know you gave me your word, but I didn't get to that section.

All kinds of excuses he could have made. But this man was without excuse because he had the word of God.

He probably even heard it read regularly. He may as a rich man even have had a copy of his own. But the man was without excuse.

[28 : 20] Romans 1 18 to 21 says for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. For the invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made.

So that they are without excuse for although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking.

And their foolish hearts were darkened. He was without excuse. No one can say God wasn't fair. God built it right into his own heart.

That he knew he had a responsibility to God. He knew that God was all powerful. He knew he had obligations. Well, Abraham answers back, says if they don't hear Moses and the prophets, something more dramatic won't make a difference.

[29 : 40] And you might say, are you sure? Are you really sure? Don't you think that if Lazarus rose from the dead and went back to his brothers, they'd certainly be going, wow, that's real.

I'm certain of it. Because the word of God says that's true. But I'm also certain of it because the testimony of the word of God gives in two other places.

Now, it's a good opportunity for me to tell you that this is not the Lazarus that is the brother of Mary and Martha. It's a different Lazarus. But Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, did die.

And four days later, he was raised. What did that do? Those who were of the religious sect heard and knew of Lazarus.

And what was their plan? This man changes everything. We know God's word is true. We know we have to be right. We know we have to live differently.

[30 : 52] Not at all. They tried to kill him. They did their best to kill him. They ignored. They ignored. Now, there were some people who heard the testimony of the word and were saved.

But Lazarus's resurrection didn't change the heart of the religious leaders, nor the heart of most of the people on earth. More importantly, the resurrection of Jesus didn't change the religious leaders' heart.

God changed some of them, a few of them. But there was no wholesale, oh, he rose. I've been wrong.

And so this man is pleading for mercy. Send Lazarus and Abraham saying, you have the word of God. They have the word of God. Someone, something more won't, won't change anything.

The word of God is here. You have the word of God. Think about that. How many Bibles? I don't want you to answer. How many Bibles do you have sitting on the shelf at home?

[32 : 00] How many different pieces of electronics can you get the Bible on? We have the Bible. We have no excuse.

Do you hear the word of God? Or are you waiting until something more dramatic happens before you pay attention to it?

Are you waiting for some specific prophecy to happen, to be fulfilled, before you listen to the word of God? We are people who are as much without excuse as this fair or this rich man was.

Without excuse, we need to listen to the word of God. And then we are people just like this man.

Not only do we have the word of God, we have the truth, the basic truth of God built into every one of us. And so Jesus showed that we should heed the word of God.

[33 : 06] We spent time a couple weeks ago talking about you cannot serve God in money. And that's exactly where this parable is going. You cannot serve God in money.

These people were people who tried to justify themselves before men. And Jesus is saying, your actions reveal your heart.

And so, I want to apply this in two ways today. I want to apply it from the standpoint of a Christian and what he does with his means.

And I also want to apply it in the standpoint of a person who has never trusted Christ. And what his money and means show about his heart.

We can try to justify our actions before men our whole life long. But our actions do reveal our heart. 1 John 3.10 I'm sorry.

[34 : 12] 1 John 3.17 But if anyone has this world's goods and sees his brother in need. Yet closes his heart against him.

How does the love of God abide in him? Jesus has called us to use everything we have wisely for serving him.

That ought to be our passionate desire. My life. My means. Everything God has given me is to serve him. And John.

If you have the world's good and see someone in need. How does God's love abide in you? And then James 2.15-17 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food.

And one of you says to them, go in peace. Be warmed and filled. Without giving them the things needed for the body. What good is that? So also faith by itself.

[35 : 23] If it does not have works is dead. I really want to challenge us as Christians to see our lives as belonging to God. Everything you have God has given you.

You can say you worked. You can say you did this. You can say you inherited that. But because God is sovereign. Everything you have.

Has been given to you by him. And if you know Christ as savior. You only have hope.

Because God gave him. Gave you his son. What do you do. With what God is. I don't frankly like. Preaching messages like this. But as I mentioned at the beginning. It's over and over and over. Six times. There have been teachings.

[36 : 26] In the book of Luke. On this very topic. We can't avoid it. And we can be people who try to justify what we do or we don't do.

And I'm not saying we shouldn't be wise. We should be wise. I'm not saying we forsake. Taking care of our family. Or planning for our future in wise ways. But in all that we do.

It needs to be. God what would you have me do. With what you've given me. Because. You have given me everything.

In Christ. In Christ. So what do your actions reveal about your heart. And if you don't know Christ as Savior today.

The jump isn't big. It's the same thing. What do your actions reveal about your heart. Well I don't want to have anything to do with God.

[37 : 27] I don't want to have anything to do with God. You may justify your actions before men. But the final judgment will bear out your heart before all.

So what will your actions reveal about your heart. Your heart. Now you can say. Well this sounds like God is a pretty. Ogrelly God.

He's acting. Asking too much. But that's exactly the opposite. And the picture that Jesus has been building. Through this.

Very. Sermon. I'm talking about going back to chapter. 15 verse 1. We find. Over and over. He's not this.

Ogrelly God. In heaven. Who's saying. Give me everything you have. This is a God. Who has given his son for you. This is a God.

[38 : 31] Who has shown grace and mercy. Even by warning the Pharisees here. Who were grumbling against him. And ridiculing him. He's sharing this. That they might repent.

And come to him. Lest they. Face the same. End that this man has faced. This is not a God. Who's an ogre. This is a God.

Who is just. And gracious. In this. Series. This. I'm talking about Jesus's sermon. In this sermon. Jesus.

Has shown. Himself. And his father. To be this. Remember we use the term. Prodigal God. God does not stand over you. Saying give. Give. Give.

Give. He is the God. Gived. And given. Given. He's a God. Who calls you to repent. And give.

[39 : 27] Give. To others. Serve others. He's a product. Prodigal God. He's a product. Prodigal God. Who's. Willing to give. Those who repent.

And come to him. No matter how badly. They have messed up. Their lives. Or no matter. How badly. They have even treated God. Ridicule him. Mocking him. Laughing at him.

He's a God. Who takes great joy. In the repentance. Of those who are lost. So much so. That the angels. Are rejoicing with him.

So whether you're. A prodigal son. A proud. Older brother. A man. Who has used. Everything. For himself.

Or one who grumbles. And ridicules. Like the Pharisee. God. Warned you. To heed his word. And repent. And come.

[40 : 23] To this. Giving God. Who will show mercy. How badly. You've messed up. Your life. Let's pray.

Father. Thank you. For. Your grace. To be able. To show us. The opposite side. You've spoken. In positive ways.

Throughout this message. Encouraged. Your people. To. Give. And to live. In light. Of the great. Giving. That you've done.

And. Even as we. Ended this section. We've come. Where you've shown. In mercy. The warning.
Of. What it's like. To be on the other side. The end.
Of the one. Who is on the other side. I pray. That you would make us. To be people. Who repent. Of
serving ourselves. Lord. If there are those here.
[41 : 18] Who don't know Christ. They need to repent. Of. Their rebellion against you. And trust
you. For savior. And. Lord. For those of us. Who know you.
We fight this battle. All the time. Who am I going to use. What I have for. Am I going to use it. For
myself. Or am I going to use it. For God's kingdom. Am I going to use it. For myself.
Or am I going to use it. For others. That you would help us. To repent. Of the times. That we
choose. To use what we have. For ourselves. Rather than for you. Or for others.
And I pray. That you would. Cause us. To walk in your ways. And to love you. And to see your.
Great graciousness. To us. We pray in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.