

MEET YOURSELF IN LUKE'S PARABLES

Part 11: The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

(Luke 16:19-31)

INTRO: Luke 16 is about the *right* (invest) and *wrong* (selfish) use of possessions. The *disciples* needed to hear this so wouldn't become envious and covetous and have devotion to God displaced by desire for more (v.1).

The *Pharisees* needed to hear this because they were greedy and selfish (vv. 14-15). Like much of the charismatic thinking today, they believed that wealth was God's will and a sign of God's blessing.

Jesus tells a parable (?) about the wrong use of possessions (16:19-31). He tells about a rich man who dies and goes to hell and a poor man who dies and goes to heaven.

MAIN POINT: *All (rich or poor) who reject God and his Word are destined for eternal damnation.* This parable is NOT telling us: it's wrong to be rich and right to be poor or rich people go to hell and poor people go to heaven, nor if we do good in this life, we'll go to heaven. Rather, Jesus is giving the Pharisees (and all like them) a vivid description of what happens to people who misuse this life and who rightly use this life. As He does, He gives us a little glimpse into eternity.

I. CONTRASTS IN THE PARABLE

A. LIFE (vv. 19-21)

1. *Rich man* lived lifestyle of the rich and famous (v.19). His wealth let him live in a beautiful home, wear designer clothes, and eat delicious food. Also, he was in good health. He enjoyed the "good" things of life (v. 25). He had no interest in God or spiritual things. He never saw himself as a steward accountable to God. No indication he was a bad or cruel man, just indifferent to needs around him (v. 20).
2. *Lazarus* in contrast was a poor homeless beggar. His clothes were sores (leper) and his food was bread scraps (vv. 20-21). You could say received the "bad things" of life (v. 25). But he loved God and sought to be His faithful witness (v. 28). Only dogs showed him sympathy (v. 21). His name "God is my help" seemed to mock him.

B. DEATH (v. 22) - Note that both died. Death is great leveler.

1. Rich man no doubt had an elaborate, expensive funeral – costly spices, paid mourners, elaborate tomb. Men carried his body to the grave.
2. Lazarus dies a pauper. Text doesn't even say he was buried. Body taken to city dump and burned like garbage – no spices, mourners, tomb. But "angels carried him to Abraham's side." What a contrast! What a difference Jesus makes in how we die! Death and funeral of lost and saved very different.

C. ETERNITY (vv. 23-31)

1. *Rich man* went to "Hades". Mentioning "hell" gives us a knee-jerk reaction. Contempt for hell – talk is cultural norm. Hell seems to have fallen on hard times. Belief in its existence is down. Yet, Jesus said more about hell than heaven. Note hell's environment:
 - definite place (28) – See Matt. 25:41
 - suffering – torment (23,28), agony (24,25)
 - isolation – lonely and alone; not party time with friends!
 - fire – awesome fire of God's holy and uninhibited righteous anger.
 - God's presence withdrawn forever! He realizes where he is, is eternal.
2. *Lazarus* was carried "to Abraham's side" (v. 22). This is Paradise or heaven. A place of comfort (v. 25) and bliss. No words recorded.

II. QUESTIONS FROM THE PARABLE

Jesus didn't say a lot about the afterlife. Much of what He said is found here. Great interest in this subject. Parable answers several questions.

- A. *"IS THERE CONSCIOUS EXISTENCE AFTER DEATH?"* - When we die, we do not cease to be – no annihilation. Death is not the end but the start of a whole new existence. We all live forever. Both physical bodies in grave but both very conscious, alive, alert. No soul sleep. Both kept identities. Rich man able to remember, see, feel, taste. They were living, thriving personalities.
- B. *"ARE THERE DIFFERENT DESTINATIONS?"* – The rich man went to one location (Hades) and Lazarus to another (heaven). Both were prepared places that were very different. These only two ends.
- C. *"IS THERE A SECOND CHANCE?"* – Can I change my destiny after I die? The rich man made no effort to alter his destiny, only that of his still living family (vv. 26-28). Our eternal destination is decided while we are alive in this life. The rich man trusted in his riches; Lazarus in his God. Praying for the dead is empty. Interestingly, the people in Hades are concerned for the lost but can do nothing about it.
- D. *"DO THE DEAD COMMUNICATE WITH THE LIVING?"* (vv. 26-27) The departed dead cannot contact the living. Only demons impersonating the departed to deceive. No purgatory or reincarnation. If the dead could talk to us, what would they say? Would we listen?
- E. *"WHAT CONVINCES PEOPLE TO BE SAVED?"* (vv. 28-31) – Miracles, like resurrection; testimony of the dead; knowing the way (knew to repent). . . It takes the Word of God (vv. 29,31). Must hear it and respond in faith. God's Word is most important evidence you can examine (Rom. 10:17).

CONC: The rich man woke up but it was too late. Jesus wanted those disciples and Pharisees to feel hell's awful agony and heaven's glorious comfort. The better we grasp what is at stake, the more we'll appreciate our own rescue and our need to go to the lost.