

## Lazarus and the Rich Man

Luke 16: 19-31

19 “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. 20 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores 21 and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. 24 So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ 25 “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’ 27 “He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father’s house, 28 for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ 29 “Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’ 30 “‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ 31 “He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’ “

When we look at Parables, as with any portion of Scripture, we should always look at the context and what question or attitude that Jesus is addressing. In this one the attitude that HE is dealing with is the Pharisees’ attitude towards their wealth. They thought wealth was a sign of piety and blessing from God. They also thought that poverty was a result of sinfulness and cursing from God. They were sure that poor people were not going to go to heaven. Earlier in this chapter, Jesus had told his disciples the story of a master who approved of the dishonest “shrewdness” of his manager and told them in verse 13 that “No servant can serve two masters. 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 both God and Money” and in vs. 14 we are told that, “The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus.”

Hence as we come to the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man, we need to ask - What is Gods attitude towards the Pharisees who were devoted to money and took great pride that they had it? Would they enter the kingdom of God? What does it take to enter the kingdom (i.e. go to heaven)?

I believe there are 2 basic principles that we need to be reminded of today from this passage of Scripture.

## I. **We Can Not Earn Salvation –**

- a. **Righteousness is not based on external values** – Based upon external forces or appearances, it would seem that the rich man would be pronounced righteous and enter into God’s kingdom, and Lazarus would be rejected and condemned. However, the result after these two men died was just the reverse. Jesus proved through this parable that appearances here on earth were deceptive. Mankind, today, would “highly esteem” the rich man, yet God rejected him. Today, just as the Pharisees, we would despise Lazarus, but God justified him. Remember that the Pharisees believed their works and wealth justified them. If they kept the rules and laws, they would be justified and they would be blessed and would prosper. Therefore if one was prosperous, it must be because he was “right with God”, after all:
1. Deuteronomy 28: 1-15 says that God would prosper the Israelites if they kept his laws and He would bring poverty and adversity if they were disobedient.
  2. But we are told in Isaiah 55:8 that **“His ways are not man’s ways”**, and
  3. 1 Samuel 16:7 tells us that we should not judge on appearance.
  4. Romans 3:10 tells us that “As it is written: **“There is no one righteous, not even one”!**
  5. Romans 3:23 tells us that **“we have all fallen short of the Glory of God”**.
- b. **Righteousness is not based on Works** - “... not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:9)
1. We can not earn salvation – there is nothing that you and I can possibly do to purchase a ticket, to earn a trip to Heaven. If you are the richest man on earth, if you are the kindest woman on earth, if you sell everything you have, work with lepers or cancer patients – the works will not get you into heaven!!!!
- c. 1 John 2: 15, 16, ***“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.”***

1. I believe the application for us today is simple – stop loving the world and the things in it. Ellen and I are experiencing some financial challenges right now and it has been a very painful realization to me to realize that I have created some financial idols. Earlier this week, God woke me up one morning and told me to read Jeremiah 9. I'd like to look specifically at verses 14 and 15, **“Instead, they have followed the stubbornness of their hearts; they have followed the Baals, as their fathers taught them.” 15 Therefore, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "See, I will make this people eat bitter food and drink poisoned water.”**
2. **God wants our undivided attention – He is jealous of our time. We are told to have ‘no other God’s before HIM’ in the 10 commandments. This passage in 1 John, chapter 2, is a great reminder to not put anything in the world above God. Let us seek HIM alone!!! I was then led to Matthew 6:25-34 – and reminded that God will take care of all of our needs if we seek HIM first! Where are your priorities – do they need to be rearranged? God First!!!!!!**
  - a. **The Pharisees believed they were Godly – but they were not. They didn’t keep the law to please God, but to look good. Are you seeking to please God or man? Do you come to Church because it makes you look good or do you come to please God?**

## II. Salvation comes only by belief in Jesus

- a. **Righteousness is based on internal values – *a heart surrendered to God!***
  - i. John 14:6 says Jesus is the only way to Heaven – there are no other ways to Heaven.
  - ii. Romans 10:9 says that we simply have to believe and confess.
- b. **This righteousness is a gift – God’s grace as evidenced in the sacrifice of Jesus for the payment due for sin.**
  - i. Ephesians 2:8 says that we are saved by grace, through faith.
  - ii. Romans 6:23 tells us that ‘the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus’
- c. Man’s **failure** to believe is not due to any **lack** of evidence, but due to a closed **heart**. It is not due to a lack of evidence but due to a willful rebellion of the heart against God. The rich man wants Abraham to send Lazarus to his 5 brothers so they don’t come to same end as he has.

1. **Romans 1:20** tells us that mankind has been shown through nature that there is a God – I like to phrase this simply, ‘if someone wants to know, truly know, who or what God created and made us, God will bring them Jesus.
  - i. There was a tribe in the Amazon that was contacted by missionaries – upon hearing of Jesus, the chief simply stated, “we always wanted to know HIS name”.
2. The centurion who watched Jesus die said, ‘surely this was a righteous man’ and ‘praised God’ (**Luke 23:47**) – why could he see this and others didn’t. Did he see anything that the others did not?
3. What about the empty tomb (**Luke 24:2**)? What more evidence did people need?

Is your heart closed? Do you have a willful rebellion against God? Repent today – call out and receive the gift of salvation.

Friends, there are two principles here but basically one Truth – We need to live our lives to please and honor God. We were created for HIS pleasure! Are we pleasing HIM – how do we judge our personal actions? Does buying one more thing please God? Does watching a certain movie please HIM? Does complaining about someone or some thing please HIM? You can say, God doesn’t really care if I have popcorn or if I wear blue pants or black pants, if I own a condo or live in an R.V. – but God does care! He wants your undivided attention – He wants to be a part of every aspect of your lives! 1 Thessalonians 5:17 tells us to ‘pray without ceasing’ – what does that mean except to be in continual communication with God. Talk to HIM about everything – perhaps his communication will surprise you. Perhaps He might remind you to look a little closer and realize that you are wearing one blue and one black sock. Perhaps He will tell you to slow down and therefore miss the impending accident at mile marker 187. Perhaps He will tell you that you are wonderfully and uniquely designed by HIM and that He has a wonderful plan for your life and that HE loves you intimately and without condition. Seek first HIS kingdom and HIS righteousness and “all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33).