

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

As creatures who have rebelled against a holy God, we have become thoroughly ensnared to the power of sin. In this fallen state, we pursue our own interests and desires with little regard for God or others. Sadly, our contempt for our holy Creator often prompts us to treat His image-bearers with injustice and indifference. In Luke 16:19-31, Jesus tells a striking parable about a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. This parable reveals both the extent of human sin and the dire eternal consequences that await those who do not turn to Jesus in repentance for their sins.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Luke 16:19-31

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To present and exegete the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31.
2. To highlight the connection between our relationship with God and the way we treat those who are less fortunate than we are.
3. To discuss the grave and eternal consequences for human sin against a holy and just God.
4. To exalt Jesus as the only one who can liberate us from the power and presence of sin.
5. To remind Christians of their responsibility to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with those who have not yet believed.

QUOTATIONS

In the person of Lazarus there is held out to us a striking proof that we ought not to pronounce men to be accursed by God, because they drag out, in incessant pain, a life which is full of distresses. In him the grace of God was so entirely hidden, and buried by the deformity and shame of the cross, that to the eye of the flesh nothing presented itself except the curse; and yet we see that in a body which was loathsome and full of rottenness there was lodged a soul unspeakably precious, which is carried by angels to a blessed life. –John Calvin

Human ingenuity has done very much to bridge great gulfs. Scarcely has the world afforded a river so wide that its floods could not be leaped over, or a torrent so furious that it could not be made to pass under the yoke. High above the foam of Columbia's glorious waterfall, man has hung aloft his slender, but substantial road of iron—and the shriek of the locomotive is heard above the roar of Niagara... There is, however, one gulf which no human skill or engineering ever shall be able to bridge. There is one chasm which no wing shall ever be able to cross. It is the gulf which divides the world of joy, in which the righteous triumph, from that land of sorrow in which the wicked feel the smart of Jehovah's sword. –Charles Spurgeon

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The rich man in this parable was not condemned for being wealthy. Rather, his indifference toward Lazarus was a symptom of a deeper spiritual problem (see Proverbs 14:31 and 17:5). What do the rich man's attitude and actions reveal about his relationship with God?
2. As mentioned above, one way to measure a person's spiritual heartbeat is by looking at that person's outlook toward those who are in need. Consider your own attitude and conduct toward the destitute and disadvantaged; what do they indicate about your view of Who God is? How might there be a disconnect between what you profess about God and how you respond to His image-bearers?

3. In today's world, it has become increasingly unpopular and controversial to speak of a doctrine of eternal punishment. What does Luke 16:19-31 say about the eternal state of those who reject God? What questions about the future does this passage leave unanswered?
4. The doctrine of hell reminds Christians of our calling to proclaim the gospel to unbelievers. What does this parable say about the urgency of sharing the good news with others? See Luke 16:31. What, instead of miraculous signs, are our greatest assets when we tell people about Jesus?