

Sermon 87: The Rich Man and Lazarus: Luke 16:19-31

Text: Luke 16:19-31 "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead..."

Summary: Two men with radically different lives, faced the same temporal fate which led to a shocking eternal reversal.

Proposition: God wants us to prepare wisely for eternity.

Part 1: Two men with radically different life experiences: 16:19-21

"There was a certain rich man...And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores..."

- **This story is uniquely personal and vivid:**
 - It describes a tragic human experience that would have been common in the first century.
 - It is the only example in the gospels of Christ relating a story with a person's name.
- **The rich man was described in very specific details:**
 - **He was very wealthy: 16:19** "A certain rich man..."
 - **He was dressed in elegant clothing: 16:19** "Clothed in purple and fine linen..."
 - **He had an overabundance of food: 16:19** "Fared sumptuously every day..."
 - **He lived in a gated home: 16:20** "Laid at his gate..."

- **Lazarus was also described in specific details:**
 - **He was destitute: 16:20** "A certain beggar..."
 - **He was weak and sickly: 16:20** "Was laid at his gate, full of sores..."
 - **He lived in pain and hunger: 16:21** "Desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table..."
 - **He fought street dogs for the man's table scraps: 16:21** "The dogs came and licked his sores..."
- **Christ's audience had a very common mindset about suffering:**
 - The rich man lived an enviable life.
 - His life of ease and affluence was assumed to indicate God's favor.
 - Lazarus lived a pitiful life.
 - People would have assumed his misery was the result of some secret curse or specific sin.
- **Scripture often addresses this wrong thinking:**
 - **Job's Friends: Job 8:6** "If thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous..."
 - **The disciples: John 9:1-2** "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?"
 - **False teachers in Ephesus: 1 Timothy 6:3-5** "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness...He is proud, knowing nothing...destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself..."

Part 2: Two men with an unsurprising similarity: 16:22 "And it came to pass, that the beggar died...the rich man also died, and was buried..."

- **Lazarus died: 16:22** "And it came to pass, that the beggar died..."
- **The rich man died: 16:22** "the rich man also died..."
- **There is no more universal experience to humanity than death.**
 - **Ecclesiastes 3:1-2** "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die..."
 - **Psalms 90:10-12** "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away...So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom..."

- **Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:8** "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment...Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them...because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets...Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it..."
- **Hebrews 9:27** "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment..."

Part 3: Two men with radically different eternal experiences: 16:23-26 "In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom..."

- **Lazarus immediately went to be with God's people: 16:22** "And was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom..."
- **The rich man immediately was separated from God's people: 16:22-23** "The rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments..."
- **Lazarus was immediately comforted: 16:22** "The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom..."
- **The rich man was immediately tormented: 16:24** "He cried...have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame..."
- **There was a definite finality to their situation: 16:25-26** "Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence..."
- **Christ often warned people to flee from eternal destruction:**
 - **Matthew 8:11-12** "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth..."
 - **Matthew 10:28** "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell..."
 - **Matthew 11:23** "Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works,

which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day..."

- **Matthew 23:15** "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves..."
- **Matthew 25:30-34** "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world..."
- **In death there is an immediate separation of the unrighteous from the righteous.**
 - **This is both a simple and a complex doctrine:**
 - **Daniel 12:2** "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt..."
 - **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him...For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words..."
 - **1 Corinthians 15:51-54** "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality..."
 - **A basic breakdown of this distinction:**
 - **Everyone will experience the resurrection: 1 Corinthians 15:51, 53** "We shall all be changed... this

corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality..."

- **There is a resurrection to eternal life with God for those who are in Christ:**
 - **1 Corinthians 15:22** "In Christ shall all be made alive..."
 - **1 Thessalonians 4:14, 16** "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him...the dead in Christ shall arise first..."
- **There is a resurrection to eternal destruction in the Lake of Fire for those who reject the gospel: 1 Corinthians 15:22** "In Adam all die..."
- **Not everyone will experience physical death, though they will experience resurrection: 1 Corinthians 15:51-54** "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed..."
- **Not everyone is resurrected at the same time.**
 - **1 Corinthians 15:23** "Every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming..."
 - **Revelation 20:4-6** "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God...and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years..."
- **There is a gap of time and a real conscious existence between our death and the resurrection.**
- **The way God dealt with Old Testament Saints and the way He deals with New Testament saints during this gap of time is likely different, because of their relationship to the timing of the cross.**
 - **OT: Genesis 25:8** "Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people..."
 - **OT: 1 Kings 2:10** "So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David..."

- **OT: John 11:11** "These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth..."
- **NT: 1 Thessalonians 4:14** "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him..."
- **NT: 2 Corinthians 5:6** "We are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord..."
- **This passage vividly warns people that death and judgment are a certain reality for all who reject God's offer of salvation.**

Part 4: The most significant difference between these two men:

16:27-31 "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead..."

- **The rich man pleaded with Abraham to send Lazarus to his family: 16:27-28** "I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment..."
- **Abraham affirmed that the scriptures are sufficient: 16:29, 31** "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them... If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead..."
- **The most significant difference between these men was their response to the gospel.**

Applying Christ's teaching:

- **Conviction:**
 - Death and judgment are inescapable future realities.
 - Our wealth cannot secure our future.
 - The most important decision we make in life is what we do with the gospel.
 - There are no second chances after death.
 - There is nothing more powerful than the preached gospel.
- **Comfort:**
 - Life's greatest troubles are at worst temporary.
 - Believers who suffer will one day experience full, eternal comfort.
- **Invitation:**
 - Have you placed your faith in Christ, if not, turn to Him today.
 - Have you lost confidence in the power of the gospel, remember Christ's words.
 - Are you weary in the Christian life, there is future glory and comfort.