



DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 8: THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Read the Text

Luke 16:19-31

¹⁹ “There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰ And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹ who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, ²³ and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. ²⁴ 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.’ ²⁵ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. ²⁶ 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, and none may cross from there to us.’ ²⁷ And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— ²⁸ for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ ²⁹ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ ³⁰ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ ³¹ He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

Main Point

As we've walked through the parables from Luke, we've focused on how they all point to the Kingdom of God. This parable shines a light on the flipside of God's Kingdom: Hell. This can be an uncomfortable topic, but as we dive into what Hell is and what it means, it actually showcases the mercy and goodness of God and His perfect justice and faithfulness.

Backing up a bit from this parable, we know Jesus is being criticized by the Pharisees for hanging out with people who were considered unholy. In this

parable, he analogizes the rich man who thinks he has it made in life to the Pharisees who think they're safe and in God's good graces and how both the rich man and the Pharisees are in for an eternal and painful outcome. This is a reminder to us as well: ***our perception of our current reality is not representative of our future reality.*** How "well" we live in this life – whether that's through wealth, relationships, or status– does not guarantee us a place in God's Kingdom. In fact, Jesus has many warnings about how entering the Kingdom of God is actually *more* challenging for those who are wealthy. It doesn't preclude us from entering in, but it certainly doesn't guarantee us a spot.

As we continue on, we see the rich man and Lazarus enter into after-death experiences that are very different from their life experiences. Lazarus is accepted into the Kingdom of God, and the rich man goes to Hell. The rich man is desperate for relief, but not for anything that would actually bring true relief. He has no heart change, just a desperate desire to be relieved from his misery. Through his dire change in circumstance from his opulent life to his tormented death, we see that ***death can bring a dramatic lifestyle reversal.***

Hell is a place of conscious and eternal suffering for everyone who does not authentically trust in the saving grace of Jesus Christ. It's painful and permanent, but it's also a picture of God's perfect justice. He doesn't take pleasure in people going to Hell, which is why he gives us ample opportunity to repent and inherit His Kingdom through faith in Jesus. ***We have everything we need to make our decision.*** The only question is, will we accept it?

Reflect Together

1. What is your view and understanding of Hell? How does its eternal existence make you feel: uncomfortable, confused, sad, angry, etc.? How does its existence line up with the perfect and holy character of God?
2. How would you explain Hell and the character of God to a non-Christian or a newer believer who was asking about it and thinks it sounds harsh, unjust, and unfair?
3. Do you know someone living the life of the rich man, believing they've earned their spot in the Kingdom, when really the need to repent and place faith in Jesus still needs to happen? Pray for that person. How can you pursue them and bring truth into their life? We're having baptisms at Doxa on Easter Sunday!