

Crossing Over to the Other Side – The Rich Man and Lazarus – 10/19/2025

Luke 16:19-31: *“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 Hades, 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 set in place, 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 family, 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.’”

INTRO

-In **Luke 16**, Jesus was directing most of his teaching towards the religious leaders—The Pharisees, scribes, and teachers of the Law. These men loved the letter of the Law, but many had forgotten the true meaning and heart behind God’s Word—specifically what it means to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself.

-The story of “The Rich Man and Lazarus” focuses more on the rich man than Lazarus, so that perhaps these religious men might examine their own hearts. Just before telling this story, Luke records that many of the religious leaders who loved money were “sneering” at Jesus teaching about wealth and greed (**16:14**).

-There are two settings to Jesus’ story – This Life and The Next Life

I. This Life (vs. 19-22)

-Jesus presents the two main characters in the story—the Rich Man and Lazarus—in stark contrast to one another. The Rich man excelled in his status, lifestyle, health, and estate. Lazarus lived at the lowest end of poverty and was continually subject to suffering and shame.

-As Abraham says later: *“Son (The Rich Man), remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things.”* **(vs. 25)**

-Each day, Lazarus watched all the healthy, successful, and satisfied guests come and go from the rich man’s estate. The rich man, on the other hand, failed to see Lazarus as a person with value who should have been treated with dignity.

-At their times of death, however, stark differences remained but things were reversed. The rich man died and went into the ground through burial. Lazarus died and was given angels as his pallbearers who laid Lazarus to rest in the ultimate place of comfort: Abraham’s bosom, the place of reward in the afterlife. **(vs. 22).**

-What each man experiences in the next life is a direct result of what each man did in this life, according to Jesus.

II. The Next Life (vs. 23-26)

-From Hades, where the rich man endured punishment, he could see to the place called “Abraham’s side” where the former beggar Lazarus was receiving his reward.

-The rich man called out to Abraham, still viewing Lazarus as his inferior, *“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.”* **(vs. 24)**

-That the rich man knew Lazarus’ by name was an indictment that he did know who Lazarus was and had seen him in his state of suffering. Lazarus, a poor, dying beggar was right outside of the rich man’s gate. He had to step over him to enter his estate day by day, and he knew his name all the while.

-In the next life, the rich man’s attitude had not changed. Still to this point, his only concern was for himself.

-Abraham makes the conditions of the next life for the two men clear: *“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. between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who*

want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.”
(vs. 25-26)

III. The Path to Life (vs. 27-31)

-Finally, the rich man demonstrated some concern for someone other than himself—his family, and specifically his five brothers. Still, however, the rich man sees Lazarus as a servant to do his bidding: *“Then I beg you, father Abraham, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.”* **(vs. 27-28)**

-Abraham points the rich man to the authoritative Word of God: *“They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.... If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”* **(vs. 29, 31)**

-What did Abraham mean? God’s Word is consistent from beginning to end that God’s people are to demonstrate His love not only among their family and tribe, but also to those who are suffering, oppressed, and downtrodden. This was true in both the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (see **Deuteronomy 15:7-11**, and **Amos 5** below).

-The true path to life is in and through Jesus Christ. When we surrender our hearts and lives to Him, we live in His righteousness and we learn to see and hear as He helps to see and hear.

-Remembering our context, Jesus’ story was intended to speak directly to the religious leaders who were known for speaking about God’s commands but were failing to put them into practice. Would they have eyes to see and ears to hear from the Lord, or would they continue to ignore God’s Word and the people made in God’s image in favor of their own selfish desires? What will our response be?

Other Scriptures Referenced:

John 5:2-6: *Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. ³ Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. ⁵ One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”*

Moses – Deuteronomy 15:7-11: *If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. ⁸ Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need. ⁹ Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: “The*

seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near,” so that you do not show ill will toward the needy among your fellow Israelites and give them nothing. They may then appeal to the Lord against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. 10 Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. 11 There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.

The Prophets – Amos 5:12-15, 21-24:

¹² For I know how many are your offenses

and how great your sins.

*There are those who oppress the innocent and take bribes
and deprive the poor of justice in the courts.*

*¹³ Therefore the prudent keep quiet in such times,
for the times are evil.*

*¹⁴ Seek good, not evil,
that you may live.*

*Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you,
just as you say he is.*

*¹⁵ Hate evil, love good;
maintain justice in the courts.*

*Perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy
on the remnant of Joseph.*

...

*²¹ “I hate, I despise your religious festivals;
your assemblies are a stench to me.*

*²² Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them.*

*Though you bring choice fellowship offerings,
I will have no regard for them.*

*²³ Away with the noise of your songs!
I will not listen to the music of your harps.*

*²⁴ But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!*