

# The rich man and Lazarus

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[ 0 : 00 ] Seeking the Lord's blessing and his guidance, let us look again at the portion of scripture read.

The Gospel according to Luke chapter 16, verse 27. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, Father, that thou wouldest send him to my Father's house, and again at the last word.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

The Lord taught the people by parable.

He was not the first to use parable. We have great parables in the scripture.

[ 1 : 44 ] There's a very great parable in the book of Judges chapter 5. And another great parable used by Nathan to bring David's sin home to David's heart.

And very significantly, Jotham set the parable before the men of Israel, parable of the trees, and then fled for his life.

And we know that Nathan put his own life in danger by declaring David the man whom he meant in his parable.

It is interesting to know that the Lord did not use parables at the very outset of his ministry.

Only when opposition crystallized against him, when the people became two parties, did he use parables.

[ 3 : 15 ] And there are three series of parables. And this may interest especially the younger people. The first series spoken on the shores of the Lake of Galilee.

The first series contained eight parables. The second series, spoken after the Transfiguration, numbered fifteen parables.

And the last parables. And the last parables. And the last parables. Which were judicial. That is, which contained. Contained. Especially. The greatest element in them was an element of judgment.

They were spoken towards the end of his ministry. They were spoken towards the end of his ministry.

I said that the Jews used parables, but the best use the Jewish teachers could make was to point the light of earth upwards towards heaven.

[ 4 : 27 ] But these parables of our Lord, in them we have the light of heaven coming down amidst the shadows of our own lives.

And if one is spiritual enough, you can follow the shadows back to their source.

These parables cast long, long shadows. And if one is spiritual enough, you can follow them back. And this was the Lord's object.

He told his disciples why he was using parables. His enemies would just regard them as stories, as empty stories for them.

But his own children would find them full of spiritual meaning. This parable of the rich man and Lazarus was primarily addressed to the Pharisees.

[ 5 : 44 ] Not to the disciples. But this parable was spoken on behalf of the disciples.

It was addressed to the Pharisees on behalf of the disciples. And this is the reason why the Pharisees, as we learn from this very passage, they were covetous.

They were notoriously covetous. Now, this is strange. The Pharisees maintained that they were the keepers of God's law.

Covetousness. In the eyes of great commentators, covetousness contains all the ills which are addressed in the other.

The other commandments. That the tenth commandment contains the nine that go before them. And this was the special sin of the Pharisees.

[ 6 : 57 ] And Christ's teaching revealed these Pharisees.

In all their unspirituality, as it still does. Pharisees are always unmasked by spirituality.

The Pharisees are still covetous. If you are a Pharisee, you are covetous. You say, I do not covet anybody else's. You covet self-righteousness.

Your hands are full of it. Your life is full of it. You think you are better than the Christ.

The Pharisees still do. They heard what he said. And they derided him. They made mock of him.

[ 8 : 05 ] And the Lord revealed them in all their unspirituality. In the things of earth and the things of heaven. They were unspiritual with regard to temporal things.

And with regard to eternal things. The Lord showed how grasping they were with regard to the things of this world. And how they, the supposed custodians of the law of God.

Were constantly and openly breaking God's law. They looked upon themselves as the rich.

The Pharisees looked upon themselves as the rich people. Both in things temporal and things spiritual.

While they viewed the disciples in terms of Lazarus. They despised them. As destitute and dissolute.

[ 9 : 16 ] And the Lord shows how selfish the Pharisees were. In terms of temporal wealth.

The rich man would not even give Lazarus the crumbs which fell from his table. Remember he was addressing the Pharisees in this parable.

While spiritually. They who should have taught the people the things of God. Starved them.

This is the real meaning of this parable. The supposed teachers. They were starving the people spiritually. With a religion.

Of things from the outside. Make sure. That your religion is not of things from the outside.

[ 10 : 15 ] If it is it will just harden you. It will just take you away from God. Make sure if you are dealing with spiritual things.

That you get inside them. And the more you get inside them. The better for yourself and for everybody else. The better for yourself and for your children.

The better for themselves. The better for themselves. The better for themselves. These people externalised religion. And their religion was dead. And the first great object. Of our Lord's parable here. Was to show.

The great difference. The great difference. Between. The scene. As men see it.

And the scene. As God sees it. Of the first great object.

[ 11 : 24 ] Of the parable. It is not riches in themselves. that are condemned the Bible never does there it's the misuse of riches and the misappropriation of riches these are condemned by the Bible and the second main object of the parable is to show forth that the standing of the Pharisee and the aloofness of the Pharisee was an abomination before God and thirdly the parable condemns as we have said before their graspingness their covetousness it shows us how unrighteous this grasping nature of theirs was and all the time they claim to be the righteous one firstly then let us consider for a little the final request of the rich man in hell and then we shall consider the solemn uncompromising answer of God through Abraham and thirdly a word about Lazarus the final request of the rich man in hell the solemn uncompromising answer of God through Abraham and Lazarus stayed this evening our concern is with the closing episode of this parable the rich man requested that Lazarus should be sent to his five brothers in order to warn them what are we to make of this it looks like a concern of compassion but is it really there are no considerate thoughts in hell there is not one considerate thought in hell there is no evincing of compassion there there is no tenderness there no these words of the lost rich man embody a complaint against the sovereign God when he was saying this he was complaining against the sovereign God these words of his they embody a complaint against the Christ of God a complaint against the gospel of salvation a complaint about the unrighteousness of his own condition in his eyes in his eyes he is more or less saying

he was saying I am in this terrible place because I was not sufficiently warned about the terrible destiny awaiting the impenitent he was more or less saying God has not done enough Christ has not done enough the gospel is not enough and his five brothers who are obviously living as he himself had lived in defiance of God are bound to come to the same terrible end if something extra is not provided and he thinks he knows what this extra should be he thinks he knows that someone from the dead should testify to them oh friends this is just an argument of hell from the very midst of hell and yet we have to realize that this argument from hell is often deployed among ourselves people are dissatisfied with God people are dissatisfied with the Christ of God and with the gospel of salvation they want a gospel plus or a gospel minus they want to change the God who cannot change they want to change the God who if he could change would not be God they want to dispense with the law of God which cannot be dispensed with they want a Christ who is not the Christ they crave for a gospel which is not a gospel the very same attitude prevailed among the Jews of our Lord's time and without a doubt the concluding part of the parable was designed by the Lord to answer this attitude of the people they were forever demanding a sign to confirm their faith they wanted some extraordinary display of power that could convince them they certainly did not request this in any spiritual way but in unearthly unsensuous form they were just wanting excuses for their own unspirituality friend that's what you're doing if you are complaining against God and against his Christ and against his way of salvation you are wanting an excuse for your own unspirituality they refused the true one they refused the just one and even when Roman law would have set before them the just one what did they say they refused the man and they chose

the murderer Barabbas secondly the solemn uncompromising answer of God through Abraham if they hear not Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead how solemn should be our thoughts here this moment of this rich man's everlasting state how it should fire our own desire never never to come to such an unspeakable final destiny no man has ever realized how terrible hell is people people have drawn pictures of it and set certain notions of it abroad but no matter what they did or said about it hell is infinitely more terrible than anyone on this side can realize only one only one tasted eternal death we alluded to that already

God in our nature tasted the bitterness of hell so that we would not taste how solemn they no thought should be this man was now dead eternally does that affect you he was dead eternally besides being dead spiritually unnaturally God had passed an irrevocable sentence of doom on this man the justice of God was dealing with a sinner where mercy is not that's hell the justice of God dealing with a sinner where mercy is not and as to his argument of sending

Lazarus as an emissary to his own brothers what would that avail there was no evidence that anyone who had returned from the dead could utter a word about that state for instance we know that another Lazarus had returned from the dead but have we any evidence that he spoke one word about that state not one jot of evidence we actually believe that Lazarus state among the dead was such that he had no coherent knowledge of it himself that is the Lazarus of Bethany we are talking about now how unavailing and futile this appeal of the last rich man was what could

[ 23 : 33 ] Lazarus even though he was now a perfected saint avail no he could avail nothing but the Moses and the prophets whose words whose true words this rich man had rejected in life the Moses and the prophets whom this man had rejected whose words this man had rejected they had set before him they had pointed him to one who was to accomplish a great mysterious death and a great and glorious return from the dead the whole of the Old Testament is full of the new and at the center of the

Old Testament there is the great mysterious death of our Lord the transfiguration the transfiguration scene enacted shortly before this the transfiguration had taken place shortly before this parable was declared and it pointed emphatically to his decease which he should accomplish the whole thrust of the old economy was in terms of death and resurrection God is the God of Abraham of Isaac and Jacob what does that mean they are dead thousands of years ago are they what does the

Lord say when he declares that God is the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob he is not the God of the dead but of the living Abraham Isaac and Jacob are alive in terms of the resurrection of Jesus Christ the saints are all alive in terms of the resurrection of Christ everyone who is spiritual in this house is alive in terms of the resurrection of Christ they being dead yet speak Abel was alive in his death what about Cain what about Cain he was dead while he was alive the mark of

God the curse of God was upon him in the Old Testament there is one very powerful symbol of the resurrection at a time of sedition in the camp of Israel as they went through the wilderness others maintained that they were as good as Moses and Aaron that they were as fit to lead the people as these two men were these two had not taken upon themselves the leadership God had commissioned them and Moses laid this plan before the people every chief of every tribe was to bring his rod and they were put into the holy of holies and we know what happened that when they took them out eleven rods were dead absolutely dead what about

Aaron's rod what about it it budded and blossomed and bore fruit the three stages of growth were visibly seen there oh no place was fit for such a rod after that not Aaron's hand was fit for that rod after that there was only one place that was fit for that rod the holy of holies where God where the presence of God was and it was kept there Aaron's rod that body is no it is not more evidence that men need what do they need then what do men and women need a heart to believe the evidence they already have in the word of

[ 29 : 36 ] God it is not any messenger from the dead they require but the almighty voice of him whom death could not keep death could not hold him though it laid hold on him as the answer for our demerits imagine the mystery of that death laid hold of him as the answer for our sins our demerits but death could not keep him he destroyed death in that very hole that death took of him he took hold of death in order to destroy death men need to be raised from the dead by that voice of

God and only the spirit of God can quicken them and all that the spirit of God would be in your own experience here this night just a very short word about Lazarus we find this man who had been so different on this side poor wretched uncomfortable with an extremity of discomfort we find him now everlastingly and eternally in Abraham's bosom amidst all the comfort and the peace and the joy of life everlasting he is not there because he had been poor and despised and forsaken and hungry and derelict in this world he is there because he had been poor in a unique way uniquely poor poor in spirit that's where the blessing starts and unless we come to be poor in spirit we will not be inheritors of the blessing he was poor in spirit and the kingdom of

God belonged to him it belonged to him when he was amidst his sores and his destitution it belonged to him there that's why he went to Abraham's bosom he was in Abraham's bosom because he had been a partaker in Abraham's faith the faith of Jesus Christ this man had received and rested upon Christ alone for salvation as he was offered to him in the gospel he had known how to be poor both in natural things and in a real spiritual way and now he knows how to be rich we don't hear a word from him and the fact that we do not hear a word from him speaks volumes the fact that he does not speak speaks volumes in

Abraham's bosom he is swallowed up amidst these silences of eternal satisfaction amidst these silences of eternal meditation amidst these silences of eternal peace and eternal love where all that is not music is silence may I solemnly ask you my friend where your own or real desire is this evening may the Lord bless you with his salvation let us pray your

Lord we bless thee for the eternal fact that he who was rich rich rich with the marvel of riches which he could not leave became poor and he who could not forsake his riches partook of poverty so that we through his poverty might be rich may the gospel be blessed to everlasting souls for the redeemer's sake amen