



# Lazarus and the Rich Man

Jan 15, 2017

## Scripture: Luke 16:19-31

Introduction: I was supposed to continue my series in Mark. But unfortunately, Gospel of Mark brings in the Palm Sunday story in chapter 11 itself. I prefer preaching that story Sunday before Easter. And Easter is only on April 16th! I am like the train that came into the station a little too early, and may have to wait now! Until that time, I am going to preach some interesting parables and stories from other Gospels!

My daughter has asked me questions about life after death. One day, she said, “daddy people say that we sleep after death until Jesus comes.” Do we go to heaven as soon as we die? These are the topics I do not like any preacher to speak with authority for two reasons: first there are very few passages about this subject, second, we see things darkly. No one has been there and returned to speak with authority. But Scripture is very clear on one aspect: our God is a God of the living, and not the God of the dead, and He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They are alive and well somewhere! We also know through the transfiguration incident that Moses and Elijah are with the Lord, alive and well. So we will be alive, and we will be safe in the arms of Jesus somewhere. Let us see what the Scripture says concerning these matters. Remember, the [hades and paradise are just landscapes in this story](#). The most important thing we can learn from this story is that how we ought to live and what should be the purpose of our life!

This is a parable. That means we do not take every part of it literally, word for word. We must try to identify the main thrust of the parable. First, we may want to see the context of this passage:

Luke 15:14, 15

14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him.

15 And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.

Pharisees were told that they were lovers of money and they valued money, and wealth above everything because they taught that prosperity or wealth is a sign of God's special favor! We must remember this story in the context of greed for money and wealth becoming an idol in our life.

Luke 16: 19-21.

19 “Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. 20”And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores,



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21 and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.

There is absolutely nothing wrong being rich. What matters is what we do with that money and how we use it for needy people. But when we forget about the needy and focus on our fine clothes, wining, and dining, (as the Scripture says in **verse 19, joyously living in splendor every day**), there is something wrong. God is the one who gives us the power to accumulate wealth. It all belongs to Him. We just manage His resources. Are we going to use it carefully or just blow it up through our selfish lifestyle? This rich man indulged in selfish living.

The poor man Lazarus (Eleazar which means God is my help) lay near the rich man's gate. In the Middle East, often they sit out and eat. Here under the table, Lazarus had to compete with those stray dogs for bread that fell from the table. Lazarus had sores that were not covered. No health care, no welfare in those days. It hurts when the dogs lick the open wound. I know because I had that experience when I was young.

The rich man did not care about this poor man who sat at his gates every day and begged!

**John 3:17**

17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

There was absolutely no love of God in this rich man's heart.

**Luke 16: 22, 23**

22 "Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. 23 "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.

Here we see the real commonality among the rich and the poor. We will all die one day. It does not matter whether we are rich or poor. **We all come to a place of nothingness.** But there seem to be different paths after death, and there is life beyond death too!

The angels carried Lazarus to Abraham's bosom! (Paradise). Jesus told the thief on the cross, "today you will be in paradise with me." Paradise is not the heaven. It is an interim place, a joyful place! Heaven is not Abraham's bosom, Heaven is our Lord Jesus' bosom! It does not matter where we are. As long as we are in Christ, we will be rejoicing. As long as we are in the Spirit, our joy will be full.



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The rich man died, and he was buried. Perhaps in a lavish manner. But the next verse tells us very clearly that the rich man was in Hades! His body might have been buried, but his soul descended into Hades. The following description I am going to tell you is from the Greek Mythology and not from the Bible. But Jesus spoke in a language that all people could understand at that time. As per Greek mythology, Hades is a Place where the dead spirits descend underground, and they cannot escape after that. You can check in, but you cannot check out! Hades has five lakes, and one of them is a lake of tormenting fire. The Hades, the god of the underground, is more like a jail warden. His primary job is to keep the spirits tormented and under tight control, so they cannot escape. Jesus told Peter in Matthew 16:18. Even gates of Hades cannot prevail over the church. Jesus went down and set those captives free. In other words, death, and underground gods cannot keep the saints of God anymore!

In any case, the important point to remember is that there seems to be an immediate separation between the good people and the wicked right after our death, and there is awareness and consciousness of our soul after death. The rich man saw Abraham and Lazarus sitting in Abraham's bosom!

### Luke. 16:24-26

24 "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'

25 "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.'

26 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.'

In verse 24, Jesus describes the pain very vividly. The rich man was in agony in that fire and he was thirsty! But then Abraham's reply is kind of strange! Bernie Sanders would have loved this answer!

25 Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony."

If we use that same logic, Abraham should not have been in paradise. He is in paradise because he believed in God and followed His will. So we should take that statement as Abraham's personal opinion toward the rich man rather than God saying that!



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Then Abraham points out the real reason: there is a gulf between the paradise and Hades. No one can cross those boundaries. Once we go to heaven, we will not accidentally slip over to Hades or the lake of fire.

**What a comforting thought!** If there is a way, we will try to venture into the other side! That is human nature! I thank God, He has made a barrier.

The rich man pleaded as follows:

**Luke 16: 27-31**

**27. "And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house—  
28. for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'**

**29 "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'**

**30 "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!'**

**31 "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"**

Now we come across the importance of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ! The rich man wanted Abraham to send Lazarus to his five brothers to warn about Hades, a place of torment. He was again selfish. He wanted Lazarus to preach to his five brothers only! What about other lost souls? Why can't we have the same concern for all lost souls? I thank God for Jesus Christ who did just that to everyone and opened our eyes and saved us!

The rich man stopped thinking about his own sufferings, and he started interceding for his five brothers so that they may not end up in Hades! During his lifetime, the rich man was promoting rich, selfish lifestyle, but now he became very focused on sharing the Word to other people. It was too late for him. I hope and pray, it will not be too late for anyone of us. It is not enough that we are saved, but we must strive to win over our brothers and sisters and friends!

But Abraham's answer may surprise some of us! Abraham simply said, "they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them!

What a shocking answer! The people in those days did not have a printing press. Very few copies of Old Testament were floating around. People had to come on Sabbath day to a nearby synagogue to hear the Word of God! In spite of all those difficulties, Abraham expected those five brothers to go to the place where the Word of God was preached and then repent! **Do you think we have any excuse not to repent?**



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We all have at least ten Bibles in our house. We have at least ten favorite preachers to listen to. When we flip the radio or TV or surf the internet, hundreds of sermons comes pouring in. Do you think, we will have any excuse for not repenting and coming to Christ? Or for not living our life according to the Word of God? **Absolutely Not!** God has raised churches all around to proclaim the Word of God! Come running to church eagerly to hear the Word of God, and don't just hear, do as it says!

The rich man tried to underestimate the power of the Word of God and emphasize the power of miracle of resurrection.

30“But he said, ‘**No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!**’

The rich man thought that spectacular miracle of resurrection would make his brothers turn around. But that is a false assumption. Jesus, our Lord, did spectacular miracles! He even resurrected some people. Yet there was not much conversion! **Only Holy Spirit through the Word of God can resurrect us and quicken us!**

Abraham's answer again **emphasizes the Word of God over miracles and personal testimonies!**

31“But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’”

Dear ones, if somebody does not want to listen to the Word of God, then no matter what we do, he will not listen. Sometimes we take things very personally. **We share our life, our testimonies to our loved ones, yet they do not respond. We tend to think, in such cases, that we did not share properly.** Don't take it personally. Before they heard you, they had already rejected the Word of God in their heart. No matter how many Scripture passages you share, it will not sink in! Mighty miracles also will not touch them!

## **Conclusion:**

This is a very powerful parable - it warns us of our destination after death.

There is indeed a separation between the righteous and the wicked.

This parable teaches us how we ought to take care of the needy who come to us for help.

Also this parable teaches us the real purpose of our life! Proclaiming the Word and obeying the Word are to be our main focus. It is a shame that the rich man learned that after his death!



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Our purpose is to seek and save that which is lost. We must preach the Word, be instant in season, out of season, and strive to deliver those who are lost. But many will turn cold shoulders to our admonition. Do not take it Personal! They have rejected the Word of God before they reject your teaching!

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