

Luke 16:19-31

**Introduction:** This illustrating story is told to all the money-lovers, especially the Pharisees. It is not exactly a parable, but it teaches a truth everyone needs to heed. It shows us the eternal danger of serving Mammon (16:13).

- 1) The strongly contrasted setting in this life—16:19-22
  - a) Concerning their circumstances—16:19-21
    - i) The extremely wealthy man—16:19 <sup>19</sup> *“There was a certain wealthy man (RCC refer to him as Dives) who clothed himself with (outer) purple and (inner) fine linen, celebrating lavishly every day (not just weddings, etc.).*
      - (1) Prosperity in finances, clothing, and food
      - (2) White undergarments beneath a purple robe. How attractive!
    - ii) The extremely poor man—16:20-21 <sup>20</sup> *But a certain destitute man named Lazarus (from Eleazar, meaning “God has helped”) was laid (by someone else) at his gate (to his elaborate mansion), covered with sores/ulcers, <sup>21</sup> and was longing to be satisfied with the crumbs that fell from the wealthy man’s table. In addition (i.e. to add insult to injury), the (wild/stray) dogs came and were licking his sores/ulcers (irritating and infecting him, making him religiously unclean).*
      - (1) Poverty of finances, health, and food.
      - (2) He suffers alone and silently. He never speaks in this story.
      - (3) The rich man does not abuse Lazarus or evict him from his property. But he does ignore him.
  - b) Concerning their deaths—16:22 (death is not the end)
    - i) The extremely poor man was righteous—16:22a <sup>22</sup> *Now it happened that the destitute man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side.*
      - (1) But not because of his poverty
      - (2) A change from suffering alone to close fellowship with Abraham.
    - ii) The extremely wealthy man was unrighteous—16:22b *And the wealthy man also died and was buried.*
      - (1) But not because of his wealth
- 2) A sobering conversation among the dead—16:23-31
  - a) The wealthy man responds to his death—16:23-24
    - i) Separated from the righteous—16:23 <sup>23</sup> *And in Hades (Sheol), as he was in torment, having lifted up his eyes, he saw Abraham at a distance, and Lazarus at his side (the place of honor at a banquet).*
      - (1) Hades is the temporary location of those heading to eternal Gehenna.
      - (2) The rich man’s wealth does not benefit him in the afterlife. How shocking to find him here instead of in heaven with God.
      - (3) The unbelieving dead are fully conscious and are suffering.
    - ii) Separated from mercy—16:24 <sup>24</sup> *And **he** (emphatic) having called out, said, ‘Father Abraham, show mercy to me, and send Lazarus, that he may*

*dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this flame.'*

- (1) He seems to want to use Lazarus as a servant. He knew Lazarus' name, but had never helped him before death.
  - (2) Just as there were no crumbs for Lazarus, there will be no water for the wealthy man. (Bock)
- b) Abraham responds to the wealthy man's demands—16:25-26
- i) Your circumstances have been reversed—16:25 <sup>25</sup> *But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and like Lazarus bad things; but now he is comforted and **you** (emphatic) are in agony.*
    - (1) Remember Jesus' teaching in Luke 6:20-26
  - ii) Your current situation is irreversible—16:26 <sup>26</sup> *And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm established (by God), so that those who want to cross over from here to you are not able, and none may cross over from there to us.'*
    - (1) Even if Abraham wanted to help, it was impossible. God has set up the afterlife in such a way that the righteous and unrighteous do no mix. (Bock)
  - iii) The unbelieving dead are aware of their eternal separation from God.
- c) Statements regarding the necessity and sufficiency of God's Word—16:27-31
- i) The wealthy man's concern for his family—16:27-28 <sup>27</sup> *Then he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him (Lazarus) to my father's house, <sup>28</sup> (because I have five brothers) that he may solemnly warn them, so that **they** (emphatic) will not come to this place of torment.'*
    - (1) He wants them to avoid his current circumstances. He apparently came from a family of fools. He knows his brothers are just like him.
  - ii) The necessity of God's Word—16:29 <sup>29</sup> *Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.'*
  - iii) The wealthy man's rebellion against God's Word—16:30 <sup>30</sup> *But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if (3<sup>rd</sup> class condition, hypothetical) someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'*
    - (1) Magill paraphrases this "No" as: "After all, I did not take them seriously, and neither do my brothers."
    - (2) He believes that there is something greater than God's revealed Word.
    - (3) The NET Bible reminds us: The irony and joy of the story is that what is denied the rich man's brothers, a word of warning from beyond the grave, is given to the reader of the Gospel in this exchange.
    - (4) In fact, another Lazarus will rise from the dead not too far in the future (John 11), and the religious leaders want to kill him!
  - iv) The sufficiency of God's Word—16:31 <sup>31</sup> *But he (Abraham) said to him, 'If (1<sup>st</sup> class condition, assumed true) they will not listen to Moses and the prophets (but they won't), neither will they be persuaded even if (3<sup>rd</sup> class condition, hypothetical) someone rises from the dead.'*

- (1) The NET Bible reminds us: this provides a hint that even Jesus' resurrection will not help some to respond. The message of God should be good enough. Scripture is the sign to be heeded.
  - (2) The OT was clear on how to treat the poor (cf. Deut. 24:10-22; Mic. 6:8). Remember the mercy God has already shown you. God is merciful. (Ex. 34:6; Ps. 116:5; Joel 2:13) Will we accurately reflect His image?
  - (3) The dead can tell us nothing more than what God has already revealed in His Word.
  - (4) The problem is not a lack of revelation; the problem is the sinful hardness of the human heart.
- 3) Thoughts for us to remember:
- a) Callous indifference to the needs of others now will be met with an absence of mercy from God in the future.
    - i) To say it another way, there is no mercy in the afterlife for those who refuse to show mercy in this life. (Bock)
  - b) What is needed is a heart that responds to God and does not seek additional signs. To see God's work and hear his call the heart must be open and the eyes must be looking to him. Only faith yields understanding. (Bock)
  - c) Will we become generous in response to God's demands to love others? Or will we live in a self-indulgent way, unconcerned about those in need?
  - d) We do well to heed the following from pastor MacArthur: There is no better method or more effective messenger with special power to give sight to the blind or life to the dead. There is no new style of ministry or strategy for evangelism that has superior power to overcome depravity and awaken a spiritually dead, self-centered, self-willed, hypocritical, religious sinner (or any other kind of sinner, for that matter). The power is in the Word of God. (Parables, 171)
  - e) This story illustrates what God revealed through Mary in 1:53, "*He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.*"