

LAZARUS & THE RICH MAN - LUKE 16:19-31

Read Luke 16:19-31 Lazarus and the Rich Man

Context: Many of us are not comfortable talking about life after death and this account by Jesus is certainly confronting to say the least. This parable is only found in Luke and follows Jesus's earlier parables in chapter 15 around the lost sheep, the lost coin and the prodigal son. This gives us a glimpse of the Father heart of God for the lost before Luke records Jesus' parable of Lazarus and the rich man and life after death. Some biblical scholars question whether this story is a parable or a true, real-life account. Their reason being that in this account two of the characters are named and that makes it unique among parables as usually characters are not named. Parable or not - there is much we can learn from this passage:

- The audience Jesus was speaking to was not only his disciples and followers of the day but also the Pharisee's.
- The Pharisee's considered wealth to be one proof of a person's righteousness. Here Jesus rocked their theological boat with this story that has a diseased beggar rewarded and a rich man punished.

I want to make it very clear that the rich man didn't go to hell because of his wealth but because of his selfishness – he was hard hearted despite his enormous blessings. Refusing to show mercy or care for Lazarus, despite the fact he must have passed him every day as he entered the gate to his home. And I wonder if this account is there to challenge us - that our choices in this life have consequences in the next.

I want to unpack three issues in this message 1) What glimpse does this passage give us about eternity? 2)What does the bible say about heaven and hell? 3)What do I need to be doing differently after reading this passage?

One thing that stands out is that there was a finality in where Lazarus and the rich man went after death - two very different places, heaven and hell and vs 26 says they were separated by a chasm that couldn't be crossed. So once they died – their eternal destiny couldn't be changed.

What does the bible say about eternity?

(1) Everyone will exist eternally, either in heaven or hell. *Matthew 25:46* (2) Everyone has only one

life in which to determine their destiny *Hebrews 9:27* (3) We can't earn our way into heaven.

Eternity in heaven or hell is determined not by what we do – but on who we believe. *John 3:36*.

Differing views of eternity (a) **Universalism**, all are eternally saved. This view denies salvation through Christ alone and contradicts *John 3:36* and *Acts 4:11* (b)**The second chance view**, after death there is still a way to escape hell. This view contradicts *Hebrews 9:27*

(c) **Annihilationism** – the view that people cease to exist. This view denies two things - resurrection after death *John 5:28* and secondly it denies any conscious awareness after death. In the account we read about Lazarus and the rich man there is a continued conscious awareness after death The rich man has a conscious awareness of identity – (he identifies Lazarus with Abraham); a conscious awareness of sensation (the rich man is in torment and thirsty). He has an ability to communicate with others (the rich man talks with Abraham) and an ability to think and reason (he asks for Abraham to send Lazarus back to warn his family)

What does the bible say about heaven? Heaven is God's dwelling place: *Psalms 33:13* There is more than one heaven *Genesis 1:1*. Paul talks about the third heaven *2 Corinthians 12:2*; Jesus has prepared a place for us. *John 14:2* At Christ's return there will be a new heaven and earth *Revelation 21:1* Revelation Ch 21 gives quite a picture of the new heaven and earth.

What does the bible say about hell? Also called *hades* or *sheol*. The bible tells us hell was designed originally for Satan and his demons *Matthew 25:41* Hell is also for those who do evil and reject Christ *Matthew 13:41* Hell is eternal and irreversible. *Revelation 14:11*

How can a loving God send people to hell? God is a God of justice. We expect justice to be served to those who do evil and God is the perfect person to do that because he is just and knows the heart and motives of all people.

BUT God's heart desire is that no one will perish 2 Peter 3:9 shows the loving heart of God. Sin separates us from God. But God has done everything he can to save us from an eternity in



hell by sending his son Jesus to die on the cross and pay the price for our sins. *Romans 5:8-9* Christ is our Saviour – saving us from hell. His sacrifice on the cross paid the price for our sin and restored our relationship with God both in this life and the next. As well as doing everything to save us God has also given freedom to choose. To choose to believe in Christ or reject him and the choice you make has eternal consequences!

What will you do differently?

There are three things that stand out to me.

(1) **What you do in this life has consequences in the next.** We cannot earn our way into heaven. Our entry is dependent on believing in Jesus. So we need to make a choice to accept him or reject him.

(2) **We need to live this life with an eternal perspective.** *2 Corinthians 4:16-18* ¹⁶ *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.* ¹⁷ *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.* ¹⁸ *So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

What is the “seen” that can so easily distract us? Striving for worldly success; possessions and wealth. I want to tread carefully here because we do need to be good stewards of the finances and blessings God has given us. However, we also need to ensure that money does not become such a focus that it becomes an idol and we put it before God. *1 Timothy 6:17-19 (NIV) Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.* ¹⁸ *Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.* ¹⁹ *In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.*

What is the “unseen”? A) Our character: The only thing we take to heaven is our character... *1 Timothy 4:8* We need to develop the fruits of the Spirit – Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. **B) Our actions:** I want to reiterate that our salvation isn't dependant on good deeds but it should result in a changed life and the desire to do good things.

Micah 6:8 *the LORD has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.*

Our actions to others: Read **Matthew 25:34-40**

(3) We need to warn others: Once the rich man was aware of the finality of his position in hell his request was to have a warning sent to his brothers. It challenges me when I allow the fear of man to prevent me from warning others. We are selfish when we know the truth and choose not to share it. Now I am not laying a guilt trip on you – neither do I want you changing your “go to” conversation from the weather to where will you spend eternity? We can't change the hearts of others, only God can do that. But there are other things we can do. *2 Corinthians 5:18* tells us we are ministers of reconciliation and our role is to point people to God.

1) We can pray for those in our circle of influence.

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-3. Also read **Acts 27:23-24** Here God saved all who were sailing with Paul – so who sails on your ship.... What friends or family can you be praying for?

2) Be prepared to engage in conversations, listen and ask questions, pray for divine encounters Recommend resources from All Together NZ - Dave Mann <https://alltogether.co.nz/resources/> God Space by Doug Pollock; A lot of voices and volumes today tell us how to live. Motivational and self-help books flood the market. But the bible is the one book that tells us how to die and today's passage has given a very confronting and challenging look into eternity – our life after death. My question to you now is – what are you going to do differently in light of the account of Lazarus and the rich man?

Download or listen to this message at:

www.icbc.org.nz

REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

1. When you read the account of Lazarus and the rich man what main points stand out to you?
2. What glimpse does this give you about eternity?
3. What “seen” things distract your from an eternal perspective?
4. What “unseen” things last for eternity?
5. What will you do differently in light of this account of Lazarus and the rich man?



CENTRAL BAPTIST

LOVE GOD : LOVE OTHERS