**The Rich Man and Lazarus**

Luke 16:19-31

Key Verse 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.’”

**Introduction**

Today’s passage shows two men with different lives and different destinies. One went to Heaven while the other to Hell. We can see the picture of both Heaven and Hell. What caused the rich man to end up in Hell after living in luxury? The rich man in this parable lived selfishly without sharing his wealth with the beggar. He enjoyed good things in this life and did not prepare for the next life. He did not listen to Moses and the Prophets who commanded men to love their neighbor and share their wealth with others. It is important to hear the words of God and put them into practice, for this life is the one and only chance to prepare for the life to come. May God help us listen to the word of God that we would not make the same mistake as the rich man in this passage.

1. Read verses 19-23. What are the contrasts between the rich man and Lazarus? (19-21) What happened to Lazarus when he died? (22a) What happened to the rich man? (22b-23) What might lead them to two different places? (Rm 2:6-10, Rm 8:18)

1-1. Read verses 19-23.

“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.”

1-2. What are the contrasts between the rich man and Lazarus? (19-21)



***“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day.***

* The rich man was dressed in purple and fine linen.
* Purple clothes were the symbol of royalty, for they were very expensive.
* This man must have celebrated life daily with great feasts. He invited all his friends and threw many fancy parties. He ate delicious food everyday.
* Such was the daily life of comfort that the rich man experienced. He was the envy of all people.
* But he was like the rich fool in Luke 12:18,

“This is what I will do, I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.”

* Here, the rich man said, “my barns, my grain, my family, and my goods.” This shows that he lived a me-centered life.
* This rich man did not realize that his wealth came from God and that his life was the gift of God.
* He did not share his wealth to love his neighbor. He did not live his life before God. He lived only for himself. He only cared about “me, me, and me.”
* The Scripture demonstrates that God is the center of all things from the beginning.
* God desires for all people of the world to know Him through the Scriptures and to worship Him.
* But this man did not worship God and did not serve his neighbor as himself.
* The rich man did not live a simple life but a luxurious life for himself. He did not learn the spiritual discipline of simplicity. He wasted his life in luxury.

***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.***

* In this parable, the rich man is unnamed while the poor beggar is named Lazarus.
* This suggests that Jesus had a personal relationship with the beggar.
* The Hebrew name “Lazar” is a contraction of Eleazar and means “God helps.”
* The name is significant, for it indicates someone dependent on God. Though he was not recognized by people, he was recognized by God.
* Lazarus had a personal relationship with God. He lived a simple life without possessions. He was a man of faith and hope in God.
* To human eyes, Lazarus was nothing but a poor beggar. His body was covered with sores, causing him constant itching.
* He desperately needed nutrition, but he had nothing to eat. Lazarus desired food but only got the embarrassing attention of unclean animals.
* One would conclude that the rich man is blessed and Lazarus is not.
* But Lazarus might have had a deep hunger for God while suffering from his physical hunger.
* He might have exercised the spiritual discipline of solitude. Lazarus never speaks in the parable; he suffers alone and in silence.

1-3. What happened to Lazarus when he died? (22a)

***“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side.***

* Here, the story switches settings. After Lazarus died, the angels carried him to Abraham’s side.
* Lazarus suffered in poverty and loneliness and sickness in this life. But in the next life he was carried to Heaven by the angels.
* Whether we like it or not, death is surely coming to all like a thief in the night at the most unexpected time.

Hebrews 9:27 says,

“Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.”

Hebrews 11:16 says,

“Instead, they were longing for a better country-a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.”

* Abraham lived by faith obeying the word of God. As God promised, our Father Abraham was already in heaven.
* Now Abraham welcomed Lazarus to his side. Though Lazarus suffered in this life, he was comforted in the next life.

1-4. What happened to the rich man? (22b-23)

***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.***

* The rich man prolonged his life a little bit longer with the help of many good doctors and medicine.
* He thought he could enjoy his life forever. But he died too. However, there were no angels for him.
* Death permanently changes everything.

***In Hades, where he was in torment,***

***And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. (KJV)***

* Hades seems to have been the common abode of the dead. The rich man and Lazarus were not in the same place, but they were not far from each other.
* They were in two areas of the same place (Hades), one a place of torments and the other a place of comfort (the bosom of Abraham).
* Some scholar stated that before the finished work of Jesus on the cross – that the spirit or soul of the human dead went to a place called Hades. Some in Hades rested in comfort; others suffered under torments of fire.
* Hades is a Greek word, but it seems to carry much the same idea as Sheol, a Hebrew word with the idea of the “place of the dead.”

Revelation 20:11-15 reads,

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. **12** And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. **13** The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. **14** Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. **15** Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.”

2 Corinthians 5:6-8 reads,

**“**Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. **7** For we live by faith, not by sight. **8** We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. **9** So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. **10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”

* Hades is something of a waiting place until the day of final judgment.
* Yet since Jesus’ finished work on the cross, now there is no waiting place or period for believers who die; they go directly to heaven, to the presence of the Lord. So from our point of view it may be safe to call either hell or Hades.
* So we don’t know how he ended up in Hades or hell but what really counts was that he was in torment.
* The rich man’s situation stands in stark contrast to Lazarus’s new position. Their status was reversed.
* He could not carry his water bottle to hell. He left everything behind. Now, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.
* Here we learn that there is a hell. Many Americans believe that there is a heaven but many of them do not believe that there is a hell.
* Also, many do not believe that they are sinners. So they think that they can all go to heaven.

1-5. What might lead them to two different places? (Rm 2:6-10, Rm 8:18)

* Lazarus’ poor condition did not bring him to heaven. If that is the case, we all should become homeless people to go to heaven.
* But that is not the case. His faith in God brought him to heaven.
* In the same way, it was not wealth that brought the rich man to hell. It was his life purpose.
* The rich man did not put God at the center of his life. Rather, he himself became the center of his life and did not obey God’s word.

Romans 2:6-10 reads,

“God will repay each person according to what they have done. **7** To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. **8** But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. **9** There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; **10** but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. **11** For God does not show favoritism.”

Romans 8:18 says,

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”

* God will judge each person according to his or her life purpose.
* If people seek his kingdom and his righteousness by faith, he will send the angels to carry them to heaven.
* If people ignore God and live selfishly without God, he will send them to hell.

Luke 13:28-29 reads,

“There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

* In that culture, whenever there was a banquet, the guests reclined at the table in such a manner, leaning back upon the chest of the one near you; to engage in intimate conversation.
* Lazarus is pictured at the banquet next to Abraham, the father of faith, enjoying rest, comfort, and fellowship; delivered from the trials known all his life.
* God will dwell among us; no sin or grievances against us; no mourning or pain (Revelation 21:3, 4).
* But the Bible makes it plain also, there is a place of eternal judgement called hell.

2. Read verses 24-26. What did the rich man request to Father Abraham? (24) What was Abraham's response? (25) What does the great chasm between heaven and hell do? (26) What should we do with our lives in order to avoid the rich man’s destiny?

2-1. Read verses 24-26.

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.’

2-2. What did the rich man request to Father Abraham? (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.’***

* The rich man tries to change his condition by appealing to Abraham. He appeals to Abraham for Lazarus’ help.
* The use of Lazarus’ name suggests that the rich man already knew Lazarus.
* The rich man requests that Lazarus put just a drop of water on his tongue to relieve his anguish from the heat. But It was too late. He sealed his own fate with his unchanged attitude on earth.

2-3. What was Abraham's response? (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.***

* Here is the reversal of their fortunes. The rich man has gone from self-indulgence to anguish. Lazarus has gone from suffering to comfort.

2-4. What does the great chasm between heaven and hell do? (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.’***



* Here Abraham explains that there is a great chasm in the afterlife. Between heaven and hell there is a great chasm.
* The separation is complete and absolute. No one can go from heaven to hell, and vice versa.
* Once one’s destiny has been decided, it will not be changed and there is no way out; it is eternal.
* Even Abraham cannot change their fates because it is God who established it.
* There will be no second chance when the door is closed. There will be no appeal.
* In the end, there will be only two kinds of people: those in heaven and those in hell.

2-5. What should we do with our lives in order to avoid the rich man’s destiny?

* Since present choices determine eternal destiny, we must repent and believe God’s Word and not be deceived by outward appearances.
* God is keenly aware of those who are suffering for the salvation of others and for his glory.
* God knows there are injustices on earth that are never compensated sufficiently.
* Many sacrificial servants of God are helping needy ones receive God’s blessing by bringing them to Jesus.
* God comforts his suffering servants, both in this life and the next.
* Finally, he will wipe every tear from our eyes and restore perfect wholeness to our entire beings. We can be sure that God will give us much more than we sacrifice for him.
* So Peter said: “...those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good” (1 Pe 4:19).
* Let’s renew our decisions to participate in the sufferings of Christ; God will surely comfort us.

3. Read verses 27-31. What was the rich man’s next request? (27-28) Why did Abraham refuse? (29) What was his reason for his repeated request? (30) Why did Abraham reject his request again? What does this tell us about the importance of listening God’s words? (31, Jn 5:24)

3-1. Read verses 27-31.

“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.’”

3-2. What was the rich man’s next request? (27-28)

***“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.’***

* When the former rich man heard Abraham's words, he began to beg that Lazarus go to his father's house on earth so that he might warn his five brothers.
* He did not want them to come to the place of torment with him. Most likely, he had influenced them to love money and pleasure.
* They were at risk of facing the same destiny as the man. He was becoming aware of his poisonous influence. His guilt and remorse were growing.
* He desperately wanted to warn his brothers to repent so that they would not join him in eternal punishment.
* Some people joke about hell, saying, they don’t mind going there, for family and friends will be there. They are fools.
* Even a wicked and selfish man wants his loved ones to avoid hell.

3-3. Why did Abraham refuse? (29)

***“Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’***

* Abraham told him, “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.” Moses refers to the Law of God. Together with the Prophets they make up the Old Testament.
* So Jesus was telling the man that his family members had the Bible and that if they took its teachings seriously they would find the way to be saved.
* How precious the word of God is to our souls! How valuable is the time we spend in Bible study when we combine it with faith that leads to obedience.

Romans 1:5 reads,

“Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+1&version=NIV#fen-NIV-27936c)] faith for his name’s sake.”

John 5:24 reads,

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

* When we believe and obey the word of God, God gives us eternal life the moment we believe.
* The rich family in the story had this precious word of life. But they were too busy in enjoying pleasures to listen to the word of God.

3-4. What was his reason for his repeated request? (30)

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

* Knowing this, the former rich man pleaded with Abraham to send someone from the dead to warn them to repent.

3-5. Why did Abraham reject his request again?

***“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.’”***

* Abraham said, “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead” (31).
* Some expect that God must warn them with signs before taking their lives. This is presumptuous.
* God has already given us the Bible which teaches us the way of salvation. We must believe and obey the word of God now.
* When we do so, we receive eternal life from Christ at that very moment.

3-6. What does this tell us about the importance of listening God’s words? (31, Jn 5:24)

***“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.’”***

John 5:24 reads,

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.”

* To reject the Scriptures is to reject Jesus, and to reject his teachings is to reject the message of Moses and the Prophets, for they are pointing to Jesus too.
* It is a matter of heart not a matter of a signs. Signs in themselves are of no value if the heart is not right.
* Believing in the word of God is not a matter of having more evidence or more sensational revelation.
* It is a decision of faith to accept the authority of the Scriptures and to believe the Bible as it is.
* But we have to repent and accept Jesus as our Savior.
* The rich man tried to preach for their brothers in hell but his request was denied three times.
* Now is the time to preach the good news.



* It is time to share the word of God. Our youth is our wealth and our time is our money. Would we like to share our life and time to invite someone to heaven?
* The only way to overcome the chasm between heaven and hell is to hear the word and believe in Jesus.

**Conclusion**

This passage teaches that nothing can change one’s fate in the afterlife. Once God has rendered judgment, it is permanent. Our choices in this life last for eternity. Either we will spend our life in comfort or in torment. Let’s accept Jesus’ word and inherit the kingdom of God he promised to all who believe in his word.

**One word: Now is the time to be saved!**