

“Rich Man, Poor Man”

Luke 16:19-31

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I. Introduction

- A. The Wall Street Journal quoted an anonymous witness who defined money as “an article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except Heaven, and as a universal provider for everything except happiness.”
- B. In Luke 16, Jesus is teaching on the subject of money and wealth
 - 1. Jesus taught three things about wealth:
 - a) Use it for eternal purposes (v. 9)
 - b) Don’t covet (v. 14)
 - c) Wealth is no proof of godliness (v. 15)
 - 2. Jesus then closes chapter 16 with the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (vv. 19-31)
 - 3. It’s stirring and disturbing
 - a) It’s the only passage in the Bible that describes the actual thoughts, emotions, and words of somebody who is in hell
 - 4. In the story, we see the rich man and the poor man contrasted in three main areas
 - a) In life
 - b) In death
 - c) In eternity

II. A Contrast in Life (Luke 16:19-21)

- A. “A certain rich man” (v. 19)
 - 1. The first contrast is obvious
 - 2. “Clothed in purple”
 - 3. “Fine linen”
 - 4. “Lived in luxury”
- B. “A certain beggar” (vv. 20-21)
 - 1. Lazarus is an abbreviation of the Old Testament name “Eliezer,” which means “God has helped”
 - a) He was laid at the rich man’s gate to beg (v. 20)
 - b) He was full of sores (v. 20)
 - c) He was hungry (v. 21)
 - 2. The contrast was flamboyant wealth and abject poverty, or “rags vs. riches”
- C. Jesus was not teaching that the rich man was condemned because he was rich, or that the poor man was blessed because he was poor
 - 1. It is true that riches can be a problem, and poverty can be a blessing
 - 2. A person’s earthly wealth is no test of the state before God
 - a) Note what the Pharisees thought
 - b) Illustration- The prosperity preachers
 - 3. Which of the two would you rather be?
 - 4. Actually, before God, spiritually, the rich man was poor
 - 5. It’s all about your values and how you look at people
 - a) Are you rich before God?

III. A Contrast in Death (Luke 16:22)

- A. Both the rich man and the poor man died
 - 1. “The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all” (Proverbs 22:2).
 - 2. Death is the great equalizer
 - a) Death is universal
 - 3. Contrast their burials (v. 22)
 - 4. What is death?
 - a) “For as the body without the spirit is dead” (James 2:26)
 - b) It’s not the end, it’s the beginning
 - c) For the Christian, death is a friend
 - d) But for the unbeliever, it’s separation from God and eternal torment (v. 23)
 - 5. Death for Lazarus was a blessing, but death for the rich man was a great tragedy

IV. A Contrast in Eternity (Luke 16:23-31)

- A. “Only seconds after death” (v. 23)
 - 1. The rich man (v. 23) and “in hell”
 - 2. Being in torments
 - 3. “Hell” is “Hades” in Greek
 - a) (Revelation 20:13-14)
 - 4. He’s now “the poor man”
- B. Lazarus (v. 23) is in Abraham’s bosom
 - 1. It’s a place of paradise
 - 2. What a contrast!
 - 3. Jesus said, “two gates,” “two roads,” and “two destinies”
 - 4. Contrast the two in eternity
 - 5. Minutes after Lazarus died, faith became sight, and everything he believed came to pass
 - 6. Not so for the rich man
 - a) He now knows that God is real, Heaven is real, and hell is real
 - 1. No Atheism in hell
 - 2. He now believed in God
 - b) He now believes in prayer
 - 1. He first prays for himself (vv. 24-26)
 - 2. Now the rich man is the beggar
 - 3. He prays in the wrong place (v. 23)
 - 4. He prays to the wrong person (v. 24)
 - c) Some facts about hell
 - 1. It’s a place of torment (v. 24)
 - 2. It’s a place of memory (v. 25)
 - 3. It’s a permanent place (v. 26)
 - d) He prays for his brothers (vv. 27-31)
 - 1. He now believed in evangelism
 - 2. For people to repent, they must hear God’s Word (vv. 29-31)
 - 3. Believe God’s Word
 - 7. The most tragic and horrifying of all is that he learns it’s too late

- a) Nothing can be done
- b) He missed his opportunity
- c) God had spoken to him in many ways
 - 1. Given him wealth
 - 2. Given him a witness
 - 3. Given him the Scriptures (v. 29)
- d) It was all now too late!

V. Conclusion

- A. It's not too late for you!
 - 1. The rich man did not go to hell because he was rich
 - 2. He went to hell because of unbelief
 - a) (John 3:36)
 - 3. Lazarus didn't go to Heaven because he was poor; he went to Heaven because he believed
 - a) (John 3:16)
 - b) God made you and loves you
 - c) Sin separates us
 - d) Jesus died for your sin
 - e) Receive Him by faith
 - 1) (Ephesians 2:8-9)
 - f) Repent and believe
 - 1) (John 3:16)
 - 2) (Mark 8:36)
 - 4. You can have eternal life right now!