

Future Investment Luke 16v19-31

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[0 : 00] A man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table.

Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried.

In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. 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.

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.

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.

[1 : 12] He answered, Then I beg you, Father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warm them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.

Abraham replied, They have Moses and the prophets, let them listen to them. No, Father Abraham, he said, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.

He said to him, If you do not listen to Moses and the prophets, then they will not be convinced, even if someone rises from the dead.

Well, let's pray together. Father, as we come to your word, to your truth, we pray that it would shape our hearts, challenge us where we need to be challenged, and that it would cause us to see that Christ is enough, and that Christ is sufficient.

Father, do a work in our lives today. Make us that we would become more like the Lord Jesus, in every way.

[2 : 52] We pray this for your glory and for our good. Amen. Well, if you won the Euro Millions, what would you do with it?

What do you dream you could do? Would you pay off your mortgage? Maybe buy a new car, or take a holiday, do a world travel trip?

Well, you mightn't win the Euro Millions. It's a very slim chance that we will. But what if you were to suddenly have access to a little extra cash?

Maybe some money is left to you in a will. Perhaps you get a promotion, start a new job, and it's got a better salary. Or some savings account has matured.

But what do you fantasise about if you just had a little bit more money? A bit more spare cash in the wallet at the end of the week?

[4 : 03] What would you do? Would you get a new phone? An upgrade, or decorate the house, or just treat yourself, and go shopping, and buy something for me? Well, money's not a bad thing.

It's not wrong to have money. Money is actually a good gift from God. But we need to be so, so careful. Money is powerful.

It has the power to control us and consume us. Look at what Jesus says back in verse 13. This comes actually at the end of another parable about money.

So verse 13, it says, No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to one and despise the other.

You cannot serve both God and money. The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus.

[5 : 12] So in response, Jesus tells a story. Now as we go through this story, I know it's familiar to a lot of you, but as we go through it, I want us to be asking this question.

Who am I in the story? Not who would I like to be, but who am I? First, in the story, there are two kinds of people.

First we have the rich man, verse 19. There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen, which was kind of the designer clothing of the day, and lived in luxury every day.

He's Mr. Giorgio Armani. That fine-cut suit. A Versace watch hanging loose on his wrist. The bling. Gated playhouse for all his parties.

And of course, his pride and joy, his personalised Lamborghini. He's a wealthy man. Now before you say, that's not me, I'm not rich, I'm not in that category, consider this.

[6 : 29] More than a billion people live on less than a dollar a day. Almost two billion others live on less than two dollars a day.

Nearly half the world's population are struggling to have adequate food, water, and shelter. Most people live and die in poverty.

In the eyes of the world, we are Mr. and Mrs. Rich. And living here in Ireland means we're actually in the top 20% of the world's most well-off.

Second, we're introduced to the poor man. Verse 20. At his gate, this great mansion, with a gate to keep certain people out, was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores, and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table, the scraps.

Even the dogs came and licked his sores. He's a neglected, malnourished, homeless beggar.

Today, we might think of him as being one of those two billion who live on less than a couple dollars a day.

[7 : 55] His family, more than likely, live beside a disease-ridden open sewer. He rummages through the city dump, hoping to find someone's scraps.

No access to clean running water. No toilet. No access to medicine or a doctor. The contrast between these two characters couldn't be greater.

One lives in luxury, the other in great poverty. One dressed in fine clothes, the other dressed in sores.

who are the rich of the world today, and who are the poor. But this is a story so much more than just physical or material wealth.

You see, while the world longs to be materially rich and chase after money, we are to strive to be spiritually poor.

[9 : 05] Mike McKinley, one author, puts it like this. A person's economic condition has the potential to help or hinder them when it comes to having the spiritual characteristics that God values and rewards.

Let me read that again. It's important. A person's economic condition has the potential to help or hinder them when it comes to having the spiritual characteristics that God values and rewards.

Let me explain that. So, if you are materially rich, it's much harder to see your spiritual need.

Because if you are rich and wealthy, well, you're self-sufficient.

You're independent. You don't need anybody's help. You can do it alone. But if you're materially poor, then it is much easier to see your spiritual need because you are others reliant.

Your economic condition means that you are dependent. You desperately need the help of somebody else to intervene. Now, think about the spiritual characteristics we should have when coming to God.

[10 : 28] We are to come like the poor, desperate, in need, longing for help, begging for mercy.

We are to come like the lost son back in chapter 15. Have a look back there to chapter 15. Again, another well-known story about the lost son and the elder brother.

Let's pick it up in verse 17. Here we have an example of what it is to come, begging for mercy, desperate for help.

Verse 17, so the son, when he had spent everything that he had had and he had nothing left, when he came to his senses, he said, how many of my father's hired servants have food to spare and here I am starving to death.

I will set out and go back to my father and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

[11 : 33] Make me like one of your hired servants. So he got up and went to his father. You see, that's the condition we are to go to God.

We are to go as hopeless, helpless, dependent, completely reliant on God's grace to be spiritually poor, longing for God's intervention.

There is no place, there is no room for self-righteous, arrogant, hard-hearted attitudes when coming to God. So as we read through this story, who are you in the story?

Are you the rich or are you the poor? Are you somebody who seeks material wealth or are you striving for spiritual poverty?

Second, there are two ways to live. The two men die, don't they?

[12 : 45] The rich man goes to Hades, we'll come back to that in a minute, and the poor man goes to heaven. Now, again, we need to be clear about this. It's not their economic status that determines their fate.

It's not because one has more money that he ends up in one place and one has less that he ends up in another. It's not that at all. The Bible is much broader than that to say that those who are rich do go to heaven and some who are materially poor don't.

It boils down to how we live in this life. That's what will determine our fate. And there's two ways we can live.

First, there's the way of faith. Look at verse 22. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side.

Again, we're going to get back to what that means, but for now I want us to see that Lazarus was a man who lived by faith. Lazarus means the one God helps.

[13 : 56] That's what his name means, the one God helps. Lazarus knows he's in desperate need. He's a man in poverty and in response God helps.

And even though he's lived in poverty, even though he dies in poverty, he never turns away from God. There's nothing in this story that tells us that he curses God and is giving off and he's bitter and angry about his life.

No, it seems that Abraham was a man of faith. You see, true faith is not determined by what I have and what I can get.

This kind of attitude that says, oh, I'll believe if you get me a better job. Or I'll follow you, Lord, if you can make me more financially stable.

True faith always says, God is enough. God is sufficient. Even when I have nothing, even if I should lose my job, even if I can't afford the mortgage this week, even if I should end up sick, true faith will always say, God is enough.

[15 : 14] God is sufficient. I will trust him. And Abraham is a man who has said, God is enough.

So there's the way of faith and then we have second, the way of self. In contrast, the rich man, it seems, lives by his own resources.

He lived by his means and he is trusted in his means. He shows no genuine desire to repent.

Look at verse 24. So he's in Hades, he's looking up, he sees Abraham and Lazarus by his side, verse 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.

verse 27, he begs the Father, send Lazarus to my family. Now, how arrogant is that?

[16 : 28] The rich man is still thinking about himself. He's been judged for how he's living or how he has lived, but he still can't see the mistakes he's made.

Rather than show any kind of remorse, he's too busy expecting people to come and serve him.

Abraham, why don't you go and tell Lazarus to come down here and give me a bit of water?

Abraham, tell Lazarus to go and tell and warn my brothers. He's still dishing out orders as if Lazarus, the poor man, somehow owed him a favour.

It's so tragic. He's being judged, unabashed, and he still can't see it. Rather than see how he has lived all his life, and repent if that were still possible, he is so self-absorbed with his own needs.

There is no genuine desire to repent. And second, he has no practical love for the poor. Look at verse 25. Abraham replied, Son, remember that in your lifetime, you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things.

[17 : 53] But now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. The rich man was so blessed during his lifetime, but yet he gave nothing to relieve the suffering of Lazarus.

Every day he would have driven out of his gates in his flashy car. Every day he ignored the beggar as he renovated and redecorated his gated mansion, and laid on his lavish parties.

He did absolutely nothing with the resources at his exposure. He lived as if the beggar never even existed. In fact, the dogs showed more compassion to Lazarus as they came and licked his sores. The rich man has lived a self-absorbed life, thinking only of himself. You see, true faith has this genuine desire to repent and give practical help to the poor.

So if I'm saying, oh yes, I'm a person of true faith, well, true faith prays this kind of prayer. Lord, forgive me for my selfish greed.

[19 : 21] Have you ever thought of ourselves as being greedy? I'm sorry for ignoring those in desperate need. Forgive me for wasting my money on things I don't need and stuffing my life with things I will never use while countless millions starve and die.

Lord, change my heart from a greedy hoarder to a generous giver. James, who wrote one of the letters in the Bible, put it this way, religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this, to look after orphans and widows in their distress.

You see, the orphan and the widow were categories for those who are most vulnerable and most poor, those who have nothing, those who can do nothing for themselves.

So true religion, true faith is expressed in giving to the 750 million who do not have access to clean water.

Think of that every time you turn on your tap to wash your teeth. True faith is expressed in helping the 24,000 children who will die this very day because they don't have enough food.

[20 : 46] And if we're finding it hard to kind of get our head around these figures, to put that into perspective, thus the total population of our nation's children wiped out in just over a month because they don't have enough food.

Think of that as we stuff our face on Christmas Day. Stephen Um, who is a pastor and author, puts it like this, children of this world, as in those who live for self, ruthlessly manage their resources to secure their future.

Children of God, those who live by faith, graciously manage their resources because their future is already secure. power. So how do you live?

Who are you in this story? Do you live for self? Or are we people who live by faith? So there are two kinds of people, two ways to live, and two eternal destinies.

Well, what happens to every person happens to them. The time came when they died. Rich or poor, plenty or in want, we will all die.

[22 : 34] and how we have lived our life on this earth will determine our eternal destiny. The two destinies are spelled out for us.

The first, those who are spiritually poor, those who know they desperately need God's intervention and help, those who live by faith can look forward to eternal pleasures.

Look at verse 22. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. Abraham, of course, was the great father figure of God's children, the man of faith.

And so to be at Abraham's side is really in a sense a picture of saying this person, Lazarus, is now in the presence of God. And he now receives a rich welcome into God's heaven.

A place of unceasing joy and eternal pleasures. Everything that Lazarus had experienced in life has now been completely switched and reversed.

[23 : 50] Again, look at verse 25. Abraham replied, Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things while Lazarus received bad things. but now Lazarus is comforted here and you are in agony.

He's gone from a lifetime of agony to an eternity of comfort. Remember how the psalmist put it.

We read this at the very beginning this morning. Psalm 16 verse 11, you made known to me the path of life. You fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

That is the wonderful destiny of those who are spiritually poor and those who live by faith. but there is another destiny that is spelled out.

For those who live for material wealth, for those who live for self, will experience eternal suffering.

[25 : 12] Look at the second part of verse 22. The rich man also died and was buried. in Hades where he was in torment. Hades simply means the realm of the dead.

In other words, he's talking here about hell. And while we don't know everything about hell, just as we don't know what everything is going to be like in heaven, there are three things here I think in this text that tell us what we can be sure of about hell.

First, hell is a conscious reality. It's a conscious reality, verse 24. Do you see what he cries out?

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.

many people think that when we die, that's it, we just die. It's an eternal unconsciousness.

[26 : 27] There's no more feeling or anything else. Believers, yes, they live for eternity, but those who do not believe, they just die and it just finishes.

But that's not true. The rich man is in hell and he can feel his senses are working and he longs for relief.

It's a conscious reality. second, it is unending suffering.

The rich man twice describes where he is as torment and agony. Look at the end of verse 28. He's pleading, he says, so that they will not come to this place of torment.

It's a place of unending suffering. Now, it's hard for us to imagine what that would actually be like.

But we can be sure it is the absence of peace and rest and contentment.

[27 : 44] No kindness, no compassion, no mercy. An endless cycle of doing wrong and punishment and doing wrong and punishment and doing wrong and punishment and no end.

On and on it goes. Year after year. It's life without God.

Which shows us the third picture. it is eternal separation. Verse 26. He says, besides all of 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 and those who want to cross over from there to us can't.

Hell is separate from heaven. There's no point in trying to think that somehow through the course of eternity they're somehow going to merge.

They're not. People who are in hell will be in hell. People who are in heaven will be in heaven. It's separation from God.

[29 : 11] And separation from God is separation from all that is good and beautiful for all eternity. imagine an eternity without the good gifts of God.

Laughter, creativity, joy, happiness, love, peace, and friendship and comfort.

Imagine an eternity without any justice or forgiveness. happiness. It's what we all deserve because we are all rich and we've all been greedy and we've all wasted the resources that God has given while countless millions starve and die every single day.

You see, Jesus has already told us about these destinies. Have a look back at chapter 6. Luke chapter 6 verse 20.

Luke 20. Luke 6 verse 20.

[30 : 44] Jesus looking at his disciples said, blessed are you who are poor and the context here is those who are spiritually poor, those who come with empty hands pleading and knowing their needing of mercy and grace.

Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now for you will laugh. Verse 24. But woe to you who are rich.

Woe to you who live the way of self. For you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now for you will go hungry and woe to you who laugh now for you will mourn and weep. hell is eternal suffering but heaven heaven is eternal pleasures.

[32 : 01] Who are we in the story? What is your destiny? What is my destiny? destiny.

The next heading I changed so it should read secure future. Secure future. As we think about these two eternal destinies we mustn't think that God is somehow unfair.

That somehow well God is not told me and God never warned me and if I knew that life would end up like this then I would have done something about it.

If God wanted me to believe if God wanted me to change how I thought about my money and the resources that I have well then he would have done some miracle and I would have changed my attitude.

Well God is not unfair. God has been crystal clear. look at verse 27 he answered the rich man answered then I beg you father send Lazarus to my family for I have five brothers let him warn them so that they will not also come to this place of torment.

[33 : 29] Look if I had known how my life was going to end then I could have done something about it so why don't you go and tell my brother so that they don't end up in the same way verse 29 Abraham replied they have Moses and the prophets let them listen to them the point is the rich man had the same message too he had the same scriptures the message of the Moses and the

prophets that was the Old Testament it is not that no one told him it is that he just never listened verse 30 no father Abraham the message of the scriptures aren't enough but if someone from the dead goes to them they will repent then they'll change their lives why don't you do a miracle just make somebody rise from the dead then they'll certainly change their ways and they'll certainly believe verse 31 he said to them if they do not listen to

Moses and the prophets they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead now don't we have the message of the Bible before us is not what we're holding in our hands right now and and didn't someone rise from the dead you see God has not left us without excuse remember where we are in Luke's account of the gospel as we've been working our way through remember that turning point in Luke chapter 9 Jesus says I'm on my way to Jerusalem Jerusalem is going to be the place of execution in Jerusalem Jesus is going to die Jesus is going to the cross these are the sorts of things

Jesus is teaching with urgency as he makes his way to the cross and after Jesus dies on the cross I want us to look at these extraordinary words that Jesus speaks go to Luke chapter 24 just a few pages on Luke chapter 24 verse 25 so all the while Jesus is saying I'm going to the cross I'm going to die and then when we get to Luke 24 we've already read at this stage that Jesus has died and now he is risen again and now he speaks to his disciples verse 25 he said to them how foolish you are and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory and beginning with Moses and all the prophets he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself so Jesus takes them through the big story of the

Bible and says listen guys it's all about me if you read your Bibles carefully it's all about my death and it's all about my resurrection because when I suffered for you on the cross I suffered for you and I died for you the reason why I went to the cross was that I would die in place of the rich man so that you might enjoy the eternal pleasures of the poor man the reason I came for you is that I would suffer hell for you so that you would never have to suffer hell so that you could enjoy the eternal pleasures of heaven forever and forever and forever Jesus came to take the blame for all of my greedy hoarding and the tight fist that we have around all our resources and in his mercy and in his grace has given me the riches of his righteousness that's the message of the scriptures are we listening to what they say and in case we don't quite believe that that's true

Jesus did rise from the dead God has given us the ultimate sign the greatest miracle an empty grave so that we can believe he defeated death so that all who live by faith all who are spiritually poor and come with their hands open longing to be filled can receive forgiveness and will receive that rich welcome in God's eternal kingdom this is the grace and mercy of an amazing God who does not treat us as we deserve to be treated the test that we have listened to the scriptures the evidence that we have believed the resurrection is that we are people who give generously to those in desperate need you see how we use our money reveals the kind of person we truly are a person of faith or a person of self how we use our money determines our eternal destiny who are you in the story who do you want to be in the story where God has made it possible for us to be like

[39 : 58] Lazarus we come with our spiritual poverty we come in repentance we say sorry for our greed and we receive the eternal pleasures that he gives to us what an incredible gracious and merciful God we have he has secured our future so that we can give generously today let's pray together thank finally who need to be through competition how to for for your fine life