

The Rich Man & Lazarus

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again for a little to the chapter we read in Luke chapter 16. Luke chapter 16.

It tells us at the beginning there, verse 19, There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and feasted sumptuously every day.

And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus. And so on. Now as we follow through the Gospel of Luke, we come to one of the most solemn stories that Jesus has ever told us.

And it concerns these two characters, the rich man and Lazarus. I'm sure we've all heard sermons and we all know this particular story.

Now as we're looking at this this morning, as we're looking at the earlier part of the chapter, we see that Jesus was talking about our attitude to possessions, our attitude to wealth, our attitude to money.

[1 : 14] And this story is still part of that. We mustn't lose sight of the fact that Jesus was talking about the attitude that we have to money.

And he was aiming what he was saying in this particular story at the Pharisees, because we saw that the Pharisees ridiculed him. They poured scorn. They laughed at him as he was talking to them, because they were covetous people.

And they often judged a person by their worth. They valued people or put an estimate on people according to how much they had of this world's goods and resources.

And Jesus is exploding and destroying that kind of myth, that kind of assessment of people here.

Now as we said this morning, people often try and compartmentalize their life into various sections. And they say, well, this is my religious bit. This is my church bit. This is, I'll have a, I'll read my Bible in the morning. I'll do a wee bit here. That's my religious part.

[2 : 22] But then the rest of my life, well, that's a secular part. I get involved and I do all the different things. And on Sunday, then I draw aside for a wee while. I go to church. And there are certain religious things.

The rest is the secular. And Jesus is showing, no, that our trust, our belief, our Christianity ought to permeate every part of our being and affect us in all the different areas and strands of life.

It shouldn't be compartmentalized. When you look at the life of Jesus Christ, he was who he was everywhere he went. And he did good wherever he went.

Whether he was teaching or preaching in the synagogue, whether he was walking along the streets, whether he was going through the cornfields, whether he was at a wedding, whether he was being invited and partaking at a great feast that was set for him in a house.

Jesus was in so many different situations. But he was always the same. Always honoring his father. Always bringing before people who he was and what he was doing.

[3 : 35] And that's who we should be as well. So that there shouldn't be this. This is this part. And we don't go near the Christianity part. It has to affect our life.

And we were looking, I'm not going to go over what we're looking at this morning, but we saw Jesus showing very clearly that our attitude to wealth and possessions has an impact upon our spirituality.

That you can't divorce these two things. That they're all tied up together. And so this story showed the Pharisees and shows everybody the real danger that people are in.

This rich man was a lover of money. And he was selfish with it. And Jesus is showing the great danger that people are in who are obsessed with money.

Lovers of money and lovers of themselves. Because to be a lover of money and a lover of yourself is dangerous. To have this heart that doesn't look out.

[4 : 39] A heart that isn't touched by the sorrows and the pains that are all around. It's a dangerous thing. Because here was this man and he closed his heart.

And he closed his push to everything that was round about him. He had all the resources. He could have so helped this man Lazarus. He could have made Lazarus' life just that little bit better.

He didn't need to send him into a hospital. He didn't need to set him up for life. But he could have given a little something. Just a little. To have made his life a little easier.

But he never did. Never once. Now, we see here that when we look at this, it's very easy for us to say, ah, well, this message is talking about money.

And about our attitude with money. And our attitude to society. And you may say to yourself, well, actually, I don't have money. So it doesn't bother.

[5 : 42] It's nothing to do with me. Well, on this occasion, it is talking about money. But it could be talking about anything. It could, for instance, be talking about a politician and his power.

It could be talking about an academic and his intellect. It could be talking about anything. And we have to look at, as we said before, Jesus is always bringing these stories home to us to make us face up to where we are.

Because, you see, there's often a Lazarus laid at our door. Not necessarily somebody covered in sores like Lazarus was here. But all the time in life, we are confronting situations where we have to say to ourselves, right, what do I do here?

How do I deal with this? Do I deal with this person? Do I deal with this situation in a Christ-like manner? Or do I just close my heart, close everything, and just forget about it?

How are we storing up for eternity? Remember what we said today with regard to resources that God gives us. Remember this.

[6 : 53] God has equipped us in life with resources. Resources of intellect. Resources of abilities in our body.

We all have different aptitudes, different strengths, different abilities, different things. God's given us all these things. God wants us to use these things for him in this life.

And he's going to ask us at the end of the day, did you or did you not? Did you use all that I gave you for yourself? Or did you use it for me?

That is a question that's going to be asked of all of us. There's no escaping it, no avoiding it. And I mentioned that if we go to Matthew chapter 25 of the story of the talents.

It's one of the most challenging of all. And just mentioning that again by way of passing. It's right into this theme. God gave, the man gave, remember how he gave to one person 5, another person 2, and another person 1.

[7 : 57] And another occasion it was 10, 5, and 1. And when he came back, he was looking for a return on what was given. But there was one man who kept everything to himself.

And he buried it away. And we see the end of that man. You have to ask yourself, what am I doing? What am I doing? And you see, the starting point of what we are doing is faith in Jesus Christ.

That's a starting point. Because unless we are united to Jesus Christ by faith, then we cannot truly work by faith. Because it's by faith we work in this life.

What is not of faith is sin. So you see, Jesus' teaching is radical. It's challenging. And that's why we've got to come under God's word. Not work out life according to how we think.

But according to how God is saying. Because we have to answer to him. And that's why it's so important to lay hold upon what the Bible is saying. Because there's a grave danger of us just saying, Oh, well, I'll just look at these things myself.

[9 : 11] And I'll work it out myself. And I'll bring my own way of sorting it out. No, we've got to go by what the Lord is saying to us. Now, we find here this particular story is unique.

In the sense that it takes us behind the scenes. Normally a person's life story. And there is no end of life stories that you can pick up today. And some people write their life story when they've barely turned 20.

And others, before they reach 30. You find any amount. And they're very interesting. When you go and read people's autobiographies. And read about their life. And there's almost an explosion of these kind of books.

And it's very interesting to see how people tick. But it doesn't matter what book you pick up. When you read about the story of a person's life. That story ends at death.

Never go beyond it. Nobody's writing a story from the grave. Nobody's writing a story from eternity. Back to us. About what happened.

[10:18] We don't find that. Might be people who have had some strange experiences. And they may have written about that. People might have ideas of what is happening. Might find stories and things like that.

But this is unique. Because in this we have a dialogue that is going on. The Lord is showing us. Is bringing us at work. Pulling shutters back to show us. And in fact we find more about the rich man and Lazarus.

In their death. And the afterlife. Than even in their lives. And one of the things that we see very clearly. Is that both men are fully conscious.

Fully aware. Of their surrounding. Where they are. Where they've arrived. And so on in eternity. Their thoughts are there.

Their memories are there. All these things. There's a complete consciousness. A complete awareness. Of where they are. What's surrounding them.

[11:18] Their situation. Their location. They're aware of all these things. People have this idea that. When a person dies. It's into this kind of sort of dreamy. Aerie sort of way.

People just float away. And they're. No. Makes it very clear. How conscious and aware people are. And the thing is this.

That as we prepare. For this journey. Out of this world. Into the next. We have to make that preparation. Here. In this life.

We all are making preparation. For different things. If you're going to go on holiday. If you're going to move away. If you're going to go to university.

Or to study. Or if you had to go. Supposing. It doesn't matter. You're leaving this island. To go somewhere. You will make preparation for it. You will make preparation. If it's by flight. Or by boat.

[12:14] By going to get tickets. You will make preparation. Where you're going to stay. You will make preparation. We all make preparation. For loads of things. Well it's absurd.

Not to make preparation. For the eternity. Which goes on forever. And ever. And ever. And yet so many people. Don't. They just sort of think. Well.

I hope everything. Will sort itself out. That's not how we. Go through life. We make preparation. Well surely. We should make preparation. For this great journey.

Now. As we know. The Lord Jesus. Is often taught. By way of contrasts. Like for instance. The house builder. On the sand. And the one on the rock. The publican. And the Pharisee. The prodigal. The elder brother. Well here again. We have these contrasts. The rich man. And the beggar. The rich man. As we see. Was very wealthy. He had the purple. Which was. An indication of wealth.

[13:08] At that particular time. There was nothing wrong. As we said. With his wealth. With his money. With his possessions. Other than the fact. That his lifestyle. Was one. Which was completely.

Self-centered. His money. Was his own. He was going to do with it. What he wanted to do. Nobody else. Was going to benefit from it. The only way. People would benefit. From his money.

Was in a way that. It could. Benefit himself. As well. I'm sure. I'm sure. This rich man. Was the envy. Of many people. But you know.

This man's. Philosophy. Simply was. Let us eat. Drink. And be merry. For tomorrow. We die. You know. The thing is. We. We. We sang. About. Some people.

Will look at the likes. Of Psalm 49. That we sing. And they will say. That's dark. Why are you singing. The like of that. In church. Well that's the reality. Remember.

[14:03] This is God's word. To us. And we've got to take. These things. To heart. And nothing. That we have. In life. Lasts. Can't take our money. With us. Can't take anything.

And Jesus. Was always. Warning. About. Storing up. Riches. That we couldn't. Take with us. He said. Now. We're not going to. Labor the point. Money. Is not wrong.

Wealth. Is not wrong. It's our attitude. To it. It's what we do. With it. As I said. This morning. You can have. A poor person. Who has a problem. With money. You can have. A rich person. Who has no problem.

With money. Because a rich person. Could have their focus. Upon the Lord. And use their money. Well. To the benefit. Of many people. A poor person. Could be so covetous. And so obsessed.

With money. And their. Their attitude. Is wrong. They've got it wrong. It's not. According to a person's. Wealth. Or lack of it. It's our attitude. To these things. And that was.

[14:57] What was wrong. With this man. His attitude. Was all wrong. And it was. It was all wrong. Because he wasn't right. With God. That's the bottom line. He wasn't right. With God.

Now the other character. Lazarus. Was like. We see. At the very opposite. End of the social ladder. He. Had. Nothing. Absolutely.

Nothing. Poor man. If ever there was one. His body was a mess. Covered in ugly sores. And indeed. The only attention. The only. Healing agency. That seemed to work.

Were the dogs. Who would come. And lick. His sores. What a life. And some friends. Would no doubt. Come along. And put him. At the gate. Of the rich man. In the hope. That some of the scraps.

Which would be falling. To the dogs. That some of these scraps. May end up being thrown out. To this beggar. These wild. Mongrel dogs. That were running around.

[15:51] In the city. Just. Scavenging about. To see what they could get. Well that's. Lazarus. Would even. He would probably. Just get the leftovers. That the dogs would leave.

There's nothing else for him. What a situation. And yet. The rich man. Didn't bother. With Lazarus. And you know. It's a fearful.

Situation. When society. Becomes like that. Where people. No longer care. And you know. In a sense. That's what's happening. It hasn't happened.

Completely. And. We thank the Lord. That. Still. In our land. And. That there are many. Who care. But community. Has broken down. We thank the Lord.

For. There is still. Community here. Not as strong. As it used to be. May we pray. That community. Will continue. And you know. Community. Will be found. Where gospel. Blessing is.

[16:47] Because at the very heart. Of the gospel. There is love. To the Lord. And love. To the neighbor. Where the gospel. Goes. That. Will be broken. And.

The community. Used to be. Community. Used to be strong. Even in the cities. But community. Has been breaking up. And breaking up. Where people. Are looking after. More and more.

Looking after. Themselves. Things. Well. If these two men. Who lived side by side. If the contrast. In their life. Was great. The contrast. In their death. Was even greater.

There's no mention. Of Lazarus. Who died. Being buried. Quite probable. Some of these beggars. Were just thrown. Onto. The burning rubbish. Sheep. Outside the city. If there was nobody.

To care for them. And nobody. To pay for a funeral. They would be just. Thrown away. The rich man. On the other hand. He was buried. Probably at a grand funeral. But where are they now?

[17:42] Here is this great difference. There was a difference. In their life. But what a difference. After. Death. The rich man. Had lived in a mansion.

Now. It is the turn. Of the beggar. Because Jesus. Says. In my father's house. Are many mansions. If it were not so.

I would have told you. I am going to prepare. A place for you. When I prepare. That place. Which he did. Through his own death. He says. I am going to come for you. And take you. To be with myself. And that is exactly. What had happened. For this beggar. This man. Who had nothing. In this world. The time. Came. Where he was to be taken. Home.

To be with Jesus. And he was taken. There immediately. We know that. From scripture. Today. Remember what Jesus said. To the thief on the cross. Today. You will be with me.

[18:37] In paradise. Right away. This very day. For the day is out. You will be with me. Our shorter catechism. Which is built upon. The word of God. Tells us.

That the souls of believers. Are at their death. Made perfect. In holiness. The work of regeneration. The regenerating work.

Has taken place. In the soul. The sanctifying work. Has been going on. Throughout. Whatever length of time. That soul. Has been. Following the Lord. But at death. A transformation.

Takes place. That cannot take place. In life. The soul. Is made perfect. In holiness. And immediately. Passes.

Into glory. And the body. Is being still united. To Christ. To rest in the grave. To the resurrection. We must never lose sight. Of that. My friend. The body.

[19:33] Has still. A link. To Christ. Even although. The body. Will disintegrate. And turn to dust. There is still. A link. It's an amazing thing.

Because we are linked. To Christ. Through his resurrection. And the body. Will rise again. Resurrected. Made. New. Restored.

Renewed. Greater than ever. It was before. But the same body. Although different. The same body. So we must always. Remember that.

That. Even when we go to the grave. And look. And maybe the years. Have gone by. You know. There is still a link. Still a link. Between the earth. And Christ. In a mysterious way.

When Lazarus. Was taken by the angels. That's what we're told. He was taken by the angels. To glory. The poor man.

[20 : 30] Died. And was carried. By the angels. To Abraham's side. What an escort. What an escort. Carried. Into the presence of Christ. It's his turn now.

For the robes. Not purple ones. White robes. Which indicate him. Being washed. In the blood of the lamb. And the white robes. Indicating the moral. And spiritual purity. Of Christ.

It's now. Lazarus. Lazarus's turn. To have. Everything. He now is the one. With the inheritance.

That's what we're told. In scripture. What do we receive? An inheritance.

Incorruptible. Undefined. That fadeth not away. Reserved in heaven. For you. Isn't that wonderful?

An inheritance. Be a great thing. To get an inheritance. To receive. One day. Comes in the post.

Hey. You. You have. You have a mansion. You have a land. It's glorious. You say to yourself. Oh.

That's tremendous. Well. That's what we're told.

[21 : 27] We're going to get. And it's incorruptible. Nothing can corrupt it. It'll never. Doesn't matter how beautiful a house. One day. The masonry. Will fall down.

One day. Things will break. There will be corruption. There'll be. It will waste away in this world. But here. There will be nothing that can ever waste away. In glory.

It will be eternally there. Incorruptible. Undefined. Reserved in heaven. For you. It's like your place.

Your. You know when you go to a wedding. And there's your name. At the table. That's your place.

It's reserved for you. Well. That's how it is in glory.

The Lord has reserved the place. He's coming. Sending his angels to take you. There's your place.

Because your name is in heaven. It's in the Lamb's book of life.

[22 : 21] And there's your place. Reserved. For you. That's how it was for this man Lazarus. But you know the holy angels were not waiting to carry the rich man.

The holy angels actually didn't go into the rich man's house. They were at the gate. But they didn't go into the house. They were at the gate because they were ministering to Lazarus.

And they were waiting to be the escort to heaven. Of Lazarus. But they didn't go into the rich man's house. Because the rich man didn't want their master.

The rich man had no time for the Lord. He was too busy with his own life. And what he was doing. But for the rich man his destiny. What a difference.

Whatever extreme difference there was in life. It's nothing compared to the extreme difference in death. What a place hell is. Hell is a place of complete disintegration.

[23 : 23] Of complete destruction. It is a place of complete domination by sin. You see there are no restraints anymore.

And it's like sin turns in on itself. Many people try and work out what is hell like. Well Jesus gives little images or little pictures to us.

A place where the fire. A place where the worm dies not. Weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Various pictures. It's interesting sometimes when you read.

Because what people are suggesting. And I'm sure there are various. But there is no question whatever. That sin continues to rage.

Unrestrained. You see in this world sin is restrained. God is restraining sin. Restrained sin in people who are unbelievers. All the time God is restraining.

[24 : 25] In this world there is love and mercy and peace and all these things. God is doing that.

There is common grace extended to all people. That's withdrawn in hell. And sin continues to rage.

Pride. It rages. Envy. Rages. Rages. Anger. Rages. Selfishness. Rages. All these things.

You see in hell. The rich man is still looking down. Although he is seeing Lazarus away up there. He is still looking down on him. Send Lazarus.

He is a nobody. Send him. He is still looking on Lazarus. As a dog's body. That is the one who to send. Still the selfishness.

Because it will always be there. It is Tim Keller who wrote this about hell. He said. Raging like unchecked flames.

[25 : 27] Their pride. Their paranoia. Their self-pity. Certain that everyone else is wrong. That everyone else is an idiot.

All humility is gone. And so is sanity. They are utterly locked in a prison of their own self-centeredness. And their pride progressively expands. Into a bigger and bigger mushroom cloud. They continue to go to pieces forever. Blaming everyone but themselves. So it goes on.

That is. He was trying to build something of the degeneration. That goes on eternally. Where sin is unchecked and unrestrained.

And it is a fearful picture. And it is no wonder that Jesus continued to warn people to escape from the wrath to come. Because you see.

[26 : 23] People say. What is God's wrath? What is God's wrath? Well we are told in Romans 1. That God has revealed some of his wrath already from heaven.

And what is that? Giving people over to themselves. So at the end of the day. Hell. Is where God. Completely gives that person over to themselves. It was. C.S. Lewis. Who said. That hell. Is the greatest monument.

This is what he said. The greatest monument. To human freedom. Now that might sound strange. But what C.S. Lewis meant by that is. That people think.

That. If they give their lives to God. That they will lose all sense of freedom. And the way to experience freedom in this life. Is to keep God out of the picture.

[27 : 23] And C.S. Lewis is showing it's the biggest mistake any person can make. Because hell. Hell. Is the extension. Of that so called freedom that people chose.

People said. We don't want God. We want to be free. Where does that lead people? It leads them to hell. Where they have chosen not to have God.

And that's a fearful thing. Because as we said earlier. Every restraint. All God's goodness and mercy. All his grace. All his favor.

All that is part and partial of this life. Is gone. And there's nothing there. But what we are. In all our. Unregenerate state. And all that's. Hidden away. All the perverseness. All the evil. It just rises up.

[28 : 24] As I said. Into this ever growing mushroom. We may not want to think about it. But this is how it is. That's why. God. Who so loved the world. Sent his only begotten son.

Into this world. To save us from that. To save us from that. God. Maybe you're saying to yourself. You know.

I don't want to go. To hell. But you know. If only something dramatic. Could happen in my life. I'd believe. I've got a wee bit of a problem. In believing. I know. We've got the Bible there.

But if I could get. If I got some great vision. If somebody came back. From the dead. I would believe. No you wouldn't. Because that's exactly.

What the rich man is saying. He said. You know. Send Lazarus again. Send. You know. I need. I need a message. To my brothers. To tell them. To warn them about this place. And Abraham says.

[29 : 19] They've got the Bible. Moses and the prophets. They've got the Bible. The rich man is saying. No. He said. Look. No father Abraham. But if somebody goes to them.

From the dead. They'll repent then. And the message from heaven. Says. No. If they do not hear. What the Bible is saying. That's.

Moses and the prophets. If they do not hear. What the Bible is saying. Neither will they be convinced. If someone. Should rise. From the dead.

Everything that we need. For salvation. Is here. In the word. The rich man. Was in hell. Not because he was rich. He was in hell.

Because he rejected. God's. Provision for him. And that was. Evidenced. In a life of. Total. Selfishness. And self-centeredness.

[30 : 12] The beggar. Was in glory. Not because he was a beggar. He was in glory. Because he trusted. In the Lord Jesus. That's it. At the end of the day. My dear friend.

Please. Please. See to it. That your soul. Is safe. In Jesus. Let us pray. Oh Lord.

Our God. As we. Come under. The word. And sometimes. This word. Is so solemn. It is so searching. We cannot. Ignore it. Or bypass it.

If we do. We do so. At our peril. Help us to hear. And to understand. And to believe. And to lay hold. Upon what God's word says. Have mercy upon us.

We pray. Take us to our homes. And safety. We pray to bless us again. As we'll gather. For the worship tonight. And we pray. Again for the family. We commit them to thee.
[31 : 11] Lord our God. We ask. That the covering of thy love. May be upon us all. Do us good. Take away from us all our sin. In Jesus name. We ask it. Amen.