

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus (ii)

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[0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's blessing as we did earlier today, this morning, we're turning to Luke's Gospel in chapter 16. And we've been considering this great parable in verses 19 to 31, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. And earlier we considered the rich man in verse 19 and then in verse 23 also. So now we're going to read from verse 20. At his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. In verse 25, speaking to the rich man about Lazarus, in verse 25, Abraham said, Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things, but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.

This great parable, as we noted earlier today, is one of the most famous of all of the Lord's parables. Certainly this and the parable of the prodigal son would be amongst the two, featured amongst the most favorite of people's own recollections of the parables of Jesus. There is something, of course, in this parable that reflects an aspect of the fullness of the gospel. And it does that in the regard in which it contrasts between us here, these two different men. It presents two men, two ways to live, and two eternal destinations. There is a positive and negative response to the gospel. There is a man here who is unconverted and a man who has through saving faith. And what we have revealed to us is what their eternal states look like. But in connection with that, of course, we have presented to us the way that they behaved in their lives, their conduct, and their lifestyle, what it is that they lived for. When we read this parable, we read it with a great deal of sympathy to Lazarus. Not just a sympathy, but a sense of which we desire to receive what he did. To, at the end, be taken up in the way he was taken up, and to receive a welcome in heaven. We are told of this in verse 22, that he was carried by the angels to Abram's side.

[3 : 08] Yet, even as we consider and reflect upon this, we are called to take a more accurate reflection upon the way we live, and to consider fully which of these two men presents to us the best reflection of our own life and experience. Because what we find is that the call of God in the gospel comes to us, comes very directly and very personally. And it is a demanding call. It is an all-consuming call.

And it reminds us that we ourselves will one day leave this world, and we will be judged, and we will receive whatever reward is due unto us. And the basis for our judgment is not based on poverty or riches, how many friends we had or did not have. But our own judgment is based upon the way and manner that we responded to the gospel and how we behaved, what we did with what we heard, and how we lived, and how we treated people and our possessions too. Our desire, surely, I'm surely speaking for everyone here, that that's your very attendance here would reflect this, that our desire surely is the better destination. And that we want to avoid the errors and the mistakes that we considered earlier in the life of the rich man who rejected the opportunities to do good, and who embraced a sense of worldliness in his own life and conduct that rooted him to this world and ensured that he had no place in heaven itself. Rather, what we want is the kind of response that Lazarus showed, a patient waiting on God, a belief and trust in him, and a sense of endurance and perseverance in our faith amidst all the different afflictions that we will face and have to engage ourselves in. And I want us just to follow the pattern that we had earlier, to consider, first of all, the character and the lifestyle of the individual, and then the eternal state. And so, first of all, to look at Lazarus, to see that he is unique. Now, we know that the parables are stories, and they were used in the biblical times, and they were very familiar amongst the teachers, that they used these stories that were constructed, that pictured ordinary situations, but illustrated deeper truths. And the Lord uses parables to teach spiritual truths, deeper truths, into our own lives. The name Lazarus is a

familiar name to us in the Bible. In the New Testament, we are familiar with the family in Bethany, Lazarus and Mary and Martha. And so, this man shares his name with that man, and actually, we're familiar with the name in the Old Testament too. It comes from the name Eliezer in the Old Testament. And the name translated means God helps. This man carried this name through his life. This was his title, this was his badge, this was his name, just as we have our name and we carry our name from our birth until our death. But for many people, it brings questions, that this man is called God helps. And then we look at his life. In verse 20, at the rich man's gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus. And the first thing that we see here is that this man is defined by poverty. And attached to his name is how he is spoken of as being poor.

Earlier, we considered in verse 19, the rich man, he is not given a name to us, but he is described by being rich well off. This man has been described by poor. And actually, the language here goes further.

It isn't just poverty. It's extreme poverty that this word is communicating to us. And not only is he poor, but he is disabled. In verse 20, he is laid at the gate. He is put there by other people, and he is unable to move himself. And so, we understand that the picture here is of some kind of disability that's humbled him, that's left him vulnerable, and that's left him in this position where he is unable to work, unable to receive an income, unable to look after himself, unable to do anything for himself. What's more than that, in verse 21, he desired to be fed by the crumbs from the rich man's table. Just crumbs would be enough for him. It would be a feast, a meal for him.

[8 : 37] What we find here is that this is quite alarming, that in a community, somebody is like this. Somebody is left in this kind of state and condition. And especially amongst the Jews, where the law of God demands that there is provision for the poor, the vulnerable, and the needy.

It is a shame for any society to be negligent of its vulnerable people, but especially so amongst the Jews. And here is a man that they've left just to the side, begging, begging just for enough to sustain him through another day. The question here is, do the people care? Does society care?

He is begging here because he lacks the basic necessities for life itself. Here is a man that we are told in verse 21, he desired to be fed from what fell from the rich man's table. He's longing for crumbs. He's starving. The man is starving. And this is a contrast to us, to what is going on on the other side of the gate, inside the rich man's house, feasting sumptuously every day.

An overabundance. He has more than he can actually even consume. And there is this gulf, a gulf between the poor and the rich, demonstrated to us here. Here is somebody who couldn't even get the scraps, who couldn't even get the crumbs. But if he could, he would make a meal of it. He's poor.

He is mistreated. At this gate, verse 20, was laid a poor man. They put him there. He didn't do this himself. He couldn't move himself. He's been moved by others. And the language that we have here, that he was laid there, it's rather a soft translation. He isn't laid there. He's dumped.

[10 : 57] They dump him there. They've got Lazarus in their midst, and they think, let's put him somewhere else. Let's ensure he's not our problem. Let's put him out of our view. Let's put him next to the rich man's house. Let's put him at the gate of the rich man. Let's make him the rich man's problem, not ours, out of the way, out of our sight, and in the sight of the rich man.

And into this, there is communicated to us the sense of which nobody's willing to help him. He has been treated as if he isn't even human. And there is no compassion. And people are walking past him every day. He's got no one.

He's got no one. He's got nothing. And all the while, in verse 19, they're going in and in to the rich man's house, in and in to the gate, in and in to the feast. They all want to be the rich man's friend. But nobody wants to know Lazarus. There is a rich man who has everything and more. There is Lazarus who has nothing. No friends. No food. No family. No home. He is alone.

He doesn't even have his independence. He is completely dependent upon any charity he can get. He can't even choose where to sit. He is dumped at the gates. And we're told that he's full of sores.

[12 : 49] And in verse 21, the dogs come and aggravate the sores. There is no alleviation of the suffering. There is no compassion. There is no compassion. No care. So he is poor. He is mistreated. And he is suffering.

It's a life of pain. A life of poverty. A life of rejection and isolation.

Life is difficult. In fact, in heaven, it was said that he had, in verse 25, received bad things. Bad things happened to Lazarus. And in this world and in this life, he faces his own difficulties and his own torment. And he was poor in health and wealth. What do you really think of Lazarus?

Maybe you pity this man. Maybe you have compassion for this man. Maybe you think what an injustice. Maybe some people are even tempted to blame God.

[14:07] A lot of people do this when they see bad things happen. They ask, where is God? Why did God allow this?

Some people may even focus in and question the quality of a life like this. And so we think in different ways. But the question is, what would we do for Lazarus?

And all the different Lazaruses that we walk past. People in need. People of whom bad things have happened to.

People who have faced suffering and injustice and pain. People who are alone. People who are poor and needy. People who are sitting at the gate with nowhere to go and no one to help.

People who are living in the gate with a lot of people who are living in the gate with a lot of people. I think what's more important than the question of what I think of Lazarus or what you think of Lazarus is, what does Lazarus think? How does he feel?

[15:24] And in many regards, we can try and picture together through his circumstances, the different experiences and emotions that he's going through. But more than what he feels, what does he believe?

What does he think in that way? I say to you that this man believes. He has saving faith.

Because we find this man in heaven. And we affirm time and again that there is only one way into heaven. It is an exclusive entrance.

That it is saving faith that is required in order to ensure that we enter into heaven. Saving faith is the kind of faith that endures to the end.

That is able to go through suffering. That is able to continue to believe that what is coming is far better. Despite all the personal present difficulties and hardships.

[16:32] That there is this constant hope that says comfort's going to come. That is able to see beyond the pain and isolation. That is able to see beyond the present suffering.

It is the kind of faith that Paul displays to us. That when he makes that comparison and he contrasts between the present suffering and the future glory.

And he says there is no comparison. I am going on. I am enduring in that way for what is ahead of me. It is that faith that is so significant and important in life. It is like that hope that is the light in the darkness.

That continues to believe that however hard and however painful things are that the belief that we have in the Lord is going to take us through all our trials and is going to take us home.

We know that life is difficult for Lazarus. His experiences are awful. But he doesn't waste his time wishing that this providence was different.

[17:45] That would be a distrust of God. Rather than be himself so distrusting of God he has a faith that knows better.

He is not discontent. He knows that God is at work. He believes however hard life may be God is at work working everything together for good.

There is a greater and better purpose that in his pain and his poverty he believes that God is shaping him. And he believes even in the midst of his great poverty that he has a greater treasure.

That he has something that no money can buy and is not worth exchanging or running away from in any regard. And he is able to display this faith with his attitude of waiting on the Lord.

He is not the kind of person for whom suffering drives him away from God. But rather in his suffering he embraces God all the more.

[18:56] He sees the contentment of knowing God. He is able to say that this is sufficient. That the Lord is enough. That however little I have in this life the Lord is enough.

The Lord is enough. This is his life as described for us and his character too. But let's move on secondly to consider his eternal state.

We are told in verse 22 the poor man died. And regardless of whether we are poor or rich whether we are many friends or few we cannot avoid this.

for the believer and the unbeliever every single person comes to this moment that we cannot move away from. This man dies and that is what said verse 22 the poor man died.

There is no death notice. No funeral notice. There is nothing here to describe for us a proper burial. A proper funeral. We wonder in that regard because we know there that the rich man is buried.

[20 : 10] And we ask the question was he buried? Or was he dumped on the side of the ground? Did he have a funeral?

Did anybody mourn for him? Did anybody miss him? Did anybody weep for him? Did anybody notice he had gone?

Or did they give a sigh of relief? That he wasn't there bothering them anymore? That's the attitude of this world to this man.

But the attitude of the unseen is completely different. In verse 22 he died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side.

This is the kind of language that is symbolic. And the Jews would consider heaven in that way.

They would consider it as being beside or with Abraham. And this is the language we have here.

[21 : 14] Jesus describing this man's death and saying that his soul has been carried by the angels immediately to be present there and to be there in heaven itself.

Immediately there. Perfect in holiness. To the Pharisees this is absolutely shocking. As much as it was shocking for them to think of the rich man in hell they're saying now this man in heaven?

This is just a shocking. They have this kind of attitude that was prevalent throughout the day and was even displayed by the disciples themselves as they asked Jesus in John chapter 9 when the blind man is before Jesus they're asking Jesus in John 9 verse 2 Rabbi who sinned this man or his parents that he was born blind?

And so there is this kind of mentality there's something wrong so somebody is to blame and they completely misunderstand this and they are absolutely shocked because they never in their imaginations thought that this man and this kind of man would be in heaven and for them it is absolutely challenging that such a reversal would come and for them it is Jesus that is giving this correction into their perception this man that was so ignored this man has come right in to heaven he's come right in to this place he's not just come in he's been carried there God sent his angels to carry this man and to bring him into heaven and to bring him right in to heaven into Abraham's side as close as possible the image there of a meal and those resting upon one another in the meal around the meal and the meal is a feast it is the messianic feast and there is a messianic feast and the picture there of the people of faith the people of God all gathered together and Jesus is painting that portrait of what this feast will be like and right there is

Abraham and right next to him right next to the father of the faithful is Lazarus this poor man this poor man is there he is there receiving comfort in verse 25 now he is comforted here he is in a better place and he is in this place that is far better here he is on this morning he opens his eye on this eternal joy he opens his eyes in heaven itself when he leaves this world he opens his eyes and he sees the Lord and he sees the Lord's people and he opens his eyes not like the rich man who is in torment and anguish and realizes what he sees and where he is here is this man and he opens his eyes and he sees this wonderful place this wonderful image and he is there in this place and he recognizes how absolutely undeserving he is but I'm just a poor man a poor sinner and here

[24 : 57] I am the man who prayed Lord have mercy upon me a sinner I'm here I see it I'm at the meal I see all these things the reality of eternal life for this man he didn't deserve it but he desired it did you decide it do you want to be there is this today not a wonderful gospel opportunity the call of the gospel to come to repent and to believe to seek the Lord and to live in the way and manner that we should in the way and manner that Jesus declares to us in the gospel in the example and the teaching that he gives to us to find ourselves in that place where there is no more suffering no more pain no more lonely nights no more tears no more sickness no more disease no more weariness no more tiredness but to be there with the

Lord in verse 25 he received bad things in this life but now in heaven in eternity he is comforted forever and ever he has found the true riches he has found the fulfillment of his treasure he has found what his life and heart and soul desired above everything else he knew that one thing was needful and you could have offered him the entire world in exchange for what was in his soul and he said no I want a greater treasure even if I have to experience poverty and pain and suffering and affliction in this life and in this world I want that treasure I want the eternal comfort I want to sit at the feast of the Messiah with Abraham I want to be there with God forever I want to be in heaven I have found this treasure and the cross has marked the spot that's where the treasure is the best thing you could possibly have that there is nothing to compare with this in the entirety of this world everything you will experience here is limited just as your days are here is the promise here is the offer here is salvation and here is a man who receives it whose name is Lazarus and our final

image of this man long after he after some time after he has left this world immediately his soul is taken in to the presence of God and finally we are able to see what his name means
God helps God helps when we wrestle with the call of the gospel in our own thoughts and in our own minds we recognize what Jesus is calling us to when he calls us to follow him when he declares to us his commandments and he applies them by telling us the parable of the good Samaritan and he tells us that if we are to be his people we are to follow him we're to be those who help we're to be those who cross the road because that's what he did he helps he cares he who was rich became poor for us we cannot then just walk past people in need and ignore them when our

Lord has done this for us and to know that there are particular promises that the Lord himself gives to the poor in 2 Samuel David records for us the promise in chapter 22 with the merciful you show yourself merciful with the blameless you show yourself blameless you save a humble!
continues in that regard in Psalm 34 to declare there that promise in verse 6 where he says the poor man cried this poor man the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles here is God's promise that he helps he helps those who cry out to him who call upon him for mercy who lay hold of him and he promises that he will take them home he will end their suffering he will end their darkness he will end their night he will end their torment he will end all the bad things and he will bring comfort!

[30 : 21] we are told of another gulf there was a gulf in this life between the rich and poor but then in eternity there is a gulf between heaven and hell in verse 26 a great chasm has been fixed those who pass from in order those who would pass from here to you may not do so and none may cross from there to us and we thought of this gulf that is fixed that it is forever unbridgeable in eternity it's too late to seek mercy that we know that hell cannot be escaped that the opportunities are over and mercy is gone that hell is forever but as hell is forever so too is heaven that the people of God are always secure that the suffering is fully over the suffering was for a little while the comfort is forever heaven goes on forever and ever it will not end and the believer is exalted into this great and wonderful position that will not end that will always be there our time is gone but today

I wanted us to be reminded of the eternal realities the things that are of the most importance a reminder to us as we already know that there is a heaven and hell and in that we find ourselves in this moment of opportunity what the gospel is calling us calling us in all its demands and reminding us that it is only through faith that saves that we don't want to be lost with anything that is superficial or mere words that doesn't follow the demands of the cross of what Jesus calls us to but that he is speaking into our hearts to give him our everything to trust him in the storms to believe that his way is better to go through the afflictions and the suffering and the torments here in order that we would have that true and genuine faith that will forever find comfort with him and be with him in the joy that he gives and continues to give for all eternity may it be so that we find ourselves there amen the Lord bless our thoughts together let's pray together our father in heaven we thank you for the gospel promises that are so significant and so life changing and they bring us to these moments in which we are called to consider how our life is going and what we are portraying and living help us not to be hard in our hearts or obsessed with our own selfishness or desire for comfort and luxury but rather we would truly follow the Lord who didn't even have a pillow for his head but who gave himself fully to the will of the Father in love and generosity and displayed everything of that on the cross help us Lord that these things would truly affect us in a way that would display that genuine and saving faith that would take us home bless each one of us we pray and forgive us our sins in Jesus name amen we're going to close by singing from psalm 16 on page 17 psalm 16 on page 17 before me constantly I set the Lord alone because he is at my right hand I'll not be overthrown therefore my heart is glad my tongue with joy will sing my body too will rest secure in hope unwavering for you will not allow my soul and death to stay nor will you leave your holy one to see the tombs decay you have made known to me the path of life divine bliss shall I know at your right hand joy from your face will shine let's stand to sing these words and then close with a benediction before me constantly I set the Lord alone because! !!

[36 : 10] my will be secure in hope and bowing for you will not allow love my my soul and to stay nor will leave your holy one!

to see the tombs decay! you have made known to me the of my divine!
divine! shine o at your hand joy from your peace will shine!

may the peace again from our Lord the great the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant equip you with everything good that you may do his will working in us that which is pleased in his sight through Jesus Christ to him be glory forever and ever Amen