

# Reaping God's Justice

Luke 16:19-31

SS Lesson for 06/24/2018

**Devotional Scripture:** Luke 6:20-26

## OUTLINE

### INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW AND KEY VERSE OF THE LESSON

*Key Verse: Luke 16:25*

*Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary*

*Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary*

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

*From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

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Gaining the whole world pales to the security of one's soul (Luke 9:25)

God knows we need material things, but our priority must be to seek Him and His kingdom (Matt 6:31-33)

Having too much influences us to disown God (Prov 30:7-9)

Having too much influences us to believe in our own strength (Deut 8:17-18)

Having too much influences us to trust in material things (Job 31:24-28)

Having too much influences us to be proud (Hos 13:6)

*Life of indigence (20-21)*

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No man knows when death will come (Luke 12:16-21)

Man brought nothing into the world and will not take anything out (1 Tim 6:7)

*Different eternal outcomes (23-26)*

The Judgment will determine eternal life or eternal punishment (Matt 25:32-34, 41,46)

Belief in Jesus will determine condemnation (John 3:18)

Eternal life is only available through Jesus (1 John 5:10-12)

Anyone not found written in the Book of Life will be thrown in the lake of fire (Rev 20:15)

Unbelief will keep some out of God's eternal rest (Heb 3:18-19)

SEEKING REDEMPTION AND RESCUE (LUKE 16:27-31)

*Plan proposed (27-28)*

When the proposal is for God to warn, people will not listen (Jer 11:7-8)

When the proposal is for prophets to warn, people will not listen (Jer 25:3-5)

When the proposal is those who desire to protect, people will not listen (Matt 23:37)

When the proposal is for a Son to warn, people will not listen (Matt 21:33-40)

*Plan rejected (29-31)*

Rejected because one is saved through the Name of Jesus (Acts 4:12)

Rejected because one is saved by coming through Jesus (John 14:6)

Rejected because one is saved by being in Jesus (1 John 5:12)

Rejected because one is saved by the gospel (1 Cor 15:2)

Rejected because one is saved by faith (Eph 2:8)

Rejected because one is saved by the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5)

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## Introduction

### Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson examines some key details about what happens after death and how we will eventually be **Reaping God's Justice**. The **study's aim** is to understand that the meaning of the story will open our eyes to understanding other truths. The **study's application** is to be alert to the fact that our lives and our beliefs have end results.

*(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)*

### Key Verse: Luke 16:25

*But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented'*

### Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

This chapter includes two parables about wealth. The first parable (vv. 1-13) was spoken primarily to the disciples (v. 1). The second parable (vv. 19-31) was addressed to the Pharisees because of their response (vv. 14-18) to the first parable.

**16:1-8a.** Jesus told this Parable of the Unjust Manager to teach that His disciples must use their wealth for kingdom purposes. The application (vv. 8b-13) follows the parable (vv. 1-8a). In the parable **a rich man... called his manager to give an account of his dealings**. The rich man had heard that the manager was not handling the wealthy owner's finances wisely. In Jesus' day managers were often hired by wealthy people to care for the finances of their estates. Such a manager would be comparable to a modern-day financial planner or trustee who controls the finances of an estate for the purpose of making more money for that estate. The money did not belong to the manager but was his to use for the estate. Apparently the manager was **wasting** those goods as the younger son had wasted his father's goods (15:13). At the beginning of the parable the rich man viewed his manager as irresponsible rather than dishonest (16:2). The manager was fired. But then, in order to make friends who might later hire him, the ex-manager charged the rich man's two **debtors** less than what they actually owed—**400** instead of **800 gallons of olive oil**, and **800** instead of **1,000 bushels of wheat**. The manager's thinking was reflected in his statement, **When I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses** (v. 4). When the rich man heard what he had done, **he commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly**. The dishonest manager had not done a good thing. But he *had* been careful to plan ahead, using material things to insure a secure future. Jesus was not teaching that His disciples should be dishonest. He was teaching that they should use material things for future spiritual benefit. This was a good lesson from a bad example.

**16:8b-13.** In three ways Jesus applied the parable to His disciples who had to live with nonbelievers in the world. First, one should use money to win people into the kingdom (vv. 8b-9). Jesus said, **The people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light**. Here Jesus set His disciples apart from the dishonest manager. The dishonest manager was a person of "this world," seeking a way to make his life more comfortable. The disciples, "the people of the light" (cf. 11:33-36; Eph. 5:8), should act in a shrewd (wise, not dishonest) manner. Jesus plainly taught that the people of light should **use worldly wealth** (Luke 16:9). Jesus also used the word "wealth" (*mamōna*) later (v. 13) when He affirmed that one "cannot serve both God and money." In verse 9 Jesus was saying that one is to use wealth, not store it up or be a servant of it. Wealth should be a disciple's servant, not vice versa. The disciples were to use wealth **to gain friends**, the same reason the dishonest manager used the rich man's wealth. The disciples would then **be welcomed into eternal dwellings**. The disciples' wise use of wealth would help lead others to believe the message of the kingdom and bring them to accept that message. Jesus' second application is in verses 10-12. If one is faithful in his use of money, then he **can be trusted** with

greater things. **True riches** (v. 11) seem to refer to the kingdom's spiritual riches of which the disciples will partake. The third application Jesus drew from the parable was that a person **cannot serve both God and money** (v. 13). As masters the two are mutually exclusive. Love for money will drive one away from God (1 Tim. 6:10); conversely, loving God will cause one not to make money his primary concern in life.

**16:14-18. The Pharisees, who loved money**, reacted negatively to Jesus' teaching about it. They **were sneering at Jesus** because they saw Him as a poor man being followed by other poor men and yet having the nerve to teach about money. Jesus responded that **God knows the hearts** of people and is not impressed with their outward appearances or their wealth. Though the Pharisees justified themselves (v. 15; cf. 15:7) **God**, who judges the inward man, will be the ultimate Judge. The Pharisees misunderstood the blessings of God's covenant. They apparently assumed that a person's wealth was God's blessing in return for his righteous conduct. They completely neglected the fact that many righteous people in the Old Testament lacked material things, while many unrighteous people had plenty. Luke 16:16-18 is included with Jesus' teaching about money to the Pharisees because it illustrates what Jesus had just said about the Pharisees justifying themselves but really being judged by God. Jesus stated that since the time of **John the Baptist**, He had been announcing God's **kingdom**. People, including the Pharisees (cf. 14:15 and Matt. 11:12), were attempting to force their **way into it**. However, in spite of justifying themselves, the Pharisees were still not living according to **the Law**. Jesus spoke of divorce as an example. To divorce and remarry constituted **adultery**. (Jesus gave one exception to this. See Matt. 5:32; 19:1-12.) Some Pharisees took a loose view of divorce. It was acknowledged that a **man** should not commit adultery. But if a man wanted another **woman**, many of the Pharisees condoned divorcing his present wife for no good reason and marrying the desired woman. In this way they thought **adultery** did not take place. However, as Jesus pointed out, this was a perfect example of justifying themselves in the eyes of men but not being justified before God (Luke 16:15). The religious leaders were not actually living according to the Law. Jesus pointed out the importance **of the Law** (v. 17), which showed that the people should live by it.

**16:19-21.** Jesus then told the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus to show that being rich should not be equated with being righteous. The **rich man** had everything he wanted. **Purple** referred to clothes dyed that color, **and fine linen** was worn for underclothes; both were expensive. A poor man, a crippled **beggar named Lazarus**, had nothing. One **lived in luxury** for himself, the other in abject poverty with hunger and poor health (**sores**). Perhaps Jesus picked the name Lazarus because it is the Greek form of the Hebrew name which means "God, the Helper." Lazarus was righteous not because he was poor but because he depended on God.

**16:22-23.** In the course of **time** both men **died**. Lazarus went **to Abraham's side** while **the rich man... was buried** and was **in hell**, a place of conscious **torment** (vv. 24, 28). *Hadēs*, the Greek word often translated "hell," is used 11 times in the New Testament. The Septuagint used *hadēs* to translate the Hebrew *še 'ōl* (the place of the dead) on 61 occasions. Here *hadēs* refers to the abode of the unsaved dead prior to the great white throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). "Abraham's side" apparently refers to a place of paradise for Old Testament believers at the time of death (cf. Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4).

**16:24-31.** The rich man was able to converse with **Abraham**. He first begged to have **Lazarus** sent over to give him some **water**. **Abraham replied** that that was not possible and that he should **remember that** during life he had everything he wanted **while Lazarus** had had nothing. Even so, the rich man had never helped Lazarus during the course of his life. Furthermore, **a great chasm** separated paradise and hades so that no one could **cross** from one to the other. The rich man next begged that **Lazarus** be sent to earth to **warn his brothers**. It was his contention that if one came back **from the dead** then his brothers would **listen** (v. 30). **Abraham** replied that if they refused to **listen to** the Scriptures (**Moses and the Prophets** represent all the OT; cf. v. 16), then they would refuse to listen to one who came back **from the dead**. Jesus was obviously suggesting that the rich man symbolized the Pharisees. They wanted signs—signs so clear that they would compel people to believe. But since they refused to believe the Scriptures, they would not believe any sign no matter how great. Just a short time later Jesus did raise a man from the dead, another man named Lazarus (John 11:38-44). The result was that the religious leaders began to plot more earnestly to kill both Jesus and Lazarus (John 11:45-53; 12:10-11).

### Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

In a previous lesson concerning the parables of God's kingdom, we were presented with a "macro" view of God's justice. Those parables, particularly the parable of the wheat and the tares, allowed us to see the big picture of how God's justice will be manifest at the end of time and how the saved and the lost will be

separated. This current lesson, however, shows us a "micro" view of God's justice. It is not focused on the big picture but looks at two individuals' lives and final destinies. The justice of God has very personal consequences for all people. The Lord's story of the rich man and Lazarus brings this reality to all who read it. The rich man and Lazarus had contrasting lives and destinies, and their story has a striking twist. The rich man had all the "good" things in life, which we see from Luke 16:19 was all about a prosperous lifestyle, with nice clothes and whatever he wanted to eat. On the other hand, Lazarus was a beggar who lay out in the street. He was physically unwell and did not get enough to eat. This is the classic contrast between the haves and the have-nots. Some experience great prosperity in this life, and some suffer great loss and deprivation. It is the same story the world over, in every time and in every place. It is the way of a fallen world. The interesting thing is that the Lord went on to show that how one fares materially in this life does not determine one's destiny in the next. The rich man and Lazarus had contrasting destinies, and they were not what the world would expect. Lazarus's deprived earthly condition did not prevent him from entering paradise. He was, in fact, saved and ushered to "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22) by the angels of God. There he was comforted. The Lord was not teaching that earthly poverty is the means of salvation, but rather that having struggles and sufferings on earth will not prevent the believer from entering "comfort" in heaven. The rich man, on the other hand, was not saved. It was a shock for him to find himself in torment after death. He learned that this end was fixed and nonnegotiable as he sought to bargain with Abraham (Luke 16:23-26). Earthly comforts do not necessarily mean a person is headed for heaven. We dare not trust in earthly success and riches, thinking that such things will commend us to God. So we see great contrasts in the Lord's story of Lazarus and the rich man. The message is stark and plain. Help us, Lord, to preach this plain message for all to hear! Abraham said that the people of the earth do not need a supernatural visitation to understand what they must do (cf. Luke 16:29). The truth is clear from the Scriptures. Those who repent and believe in the Lord Jesus will receive the comfort of salvation. Those who do not will be lost in eternal torment, no matter what was gained or lost in the brief years of their lives. God's justice involves everyone. The reaping comes to each individual person. Each one will be saved or lost.

## ***Lesson Introduction and Background***

### **From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Western culture has long emphasized that those of greater wealth have a duty to be generous with those less well off. The French phrase *noblesse oblige* has been used for centuries to refer to this sense of obligation. The phrase means "nobility obliges." It expresses the idea that those with privilege are obligated to be generous with those less privileged. We commonly hear people express this sense of obligation. They say that they must "give back" because they have been blessed beyond what they need or want. They want to "pay forward" what they have received, to show themselves grateful for their abundance. These are virtuous impulses. We encourage them, and we admire them. But from the perspective of the gospel of Jesus, some adjustment is required. Jesus showed his followers that godly generosity springs not simply from our realization that we are abundantly blessed, but from our sense of our own need. The idea of *noblesse oblige* may permit me to think of myself inappropriately as different from the person in need. The gospel in general and today's text in particular reveal, however, that I am really in the same position as the person in need.

The story in our text comes at the end of a series of parables found in Luke 15 and 16. The series begins with the Pharisees and teachers of the law, or scribes, complaining about Jesus' practice of feasting with sinners (15:1, 2). Jesus responded by telling three stories of things lost and found—a sheep, a coin, and a son. At the end of each of those three stories is a celebration that what was lost has been found. Expressed or implied in each case is comparison with the rejoicing of God and angels over sinners who repent (15:7, 10, 32). In contrast, the Pharisees and teachers of the law failed to celebrate what God celebrated. They were indifferent to God's generous grace; they did not share God's character. The dialogue continued with the Pharisees scoffing at more of Jesus' teaching because in their covetousness they loved money (Luke 16:14). Jesus replied that these religious leaders were trying to make themselves appear to be righteous, concealing hearts that harbored a condescending pride that is the opposite of what God values (16:15). Apparently not long afterward, Jesus told the story in our text. Some Bible students question whether this account should be considered a parable. As evidence, they point out that in no other parable does Jesus give a name to one of the characters. Regardless of what position one holds on this question, the impact that the story was intended to have on Jesus' detractors is unmistakable (Luke 16:15).

## Major Theme Analysis

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

*Note: Outline and points copied from previous SS Lesson dated 01/26/2014*

### **Condition of the Rich and Poor Man (Luke 16:19-21)**

19 "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.  
20 But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate,  
21 desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

#### **Life of indulgence (19)**

*Even if prosperity is gained, there is no guarantee of enjoyment of it (Luke 12:16-20)*

16 And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. 17 He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' 18 "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." ' 20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

*Gaining the whole world pales to the security of one's soul (Luke 9:25)*

25 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?

*God knows we need material things, but our priority must be to seek Him and His kingdom (Matt 6:31-33)*

31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

*Having too much influences us to disown God (Prov 30:7-9)*

7 "Two things I ask of you, O Lord; do not refuse me before I die: 8 Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. 9 Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.

*Having too much influences us to believe in our own strength (Deut 8:17-18)*

17 You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." 18 But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

*Having too much influences us to trust in material things (Job 31:24-28)*

24 "If I have put my trust in gold or said to pure gold, 'You are my security,' 25 if I have rejoiced over my great wealth, the fortune my hands had gained, 26 if I have regarded the sun in its radiance or the moon moving in splendor, 27 so that my heart was secretly enticed and my hand offered them a kiss of homage, 28 then these also would be sins to be judged, for I would have been unfaithful to God on high.

*Having too much influences us to be proud (Hos 13:6)*

6 When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me.

#### **Life of indigence (20-21)**

*Poverty is the ruin of the poor (Prov 10:15)*

15 The wealth of the rich is their fortified city, but poverty is the ruin of the poor.

*Poverty can come like a bandit (Prov 6:10-11)*

10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest — 11 and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.

*Mere talk leads to poverty (Prov 14:23)*

23 All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.

*Just because of poverty doesn't mean we can't give (Mark 12:43-44)*

43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything — all she had to live on."

*Jesus became poor so that we could be spiritually rich (2 Cor 8:9)*

9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

### ***Judgment of the Rich and Poor Man (Luke 16:22-26)***

22 So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.

23 And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'

25 But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.

26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'

### **Both faced judgment (22)**

*All men's fate is death (Eccl 3:17-19)*

17 I thought in my heart, "God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed." 18 I also thought, "As for men, God tests them so that they may see that they are like the animals. 19 Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless.

*All men are destined to die and then the judgment (Heb 9:27)*

27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

*No man can redeem their life (Ps 49:7-10)*

7 No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him — 8 the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough — 9 that he should live on forever and not see decay. 10 For all can see that wise men die; the foolish and the senseless alike perish and leave their wealth to others.

*No man knows when death will come (Luke 12:16-21)*

16 And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. 17 He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' 18 "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'"  
' 20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' 21 "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

*Man brought nothing into the world and will not take anything out (1 Tim 6:7)*

7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.

### **Different eternal outcomes (23-26)**

*The Judgment will determine eternal life or eternal punishment (Matt 25:32-34, 41,46)*

32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

*Belief in Jesus will determine condemnation (John 3:18)*

18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

*Eternal life is only available through Jesus (1 John 5:10-12)*

10 Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. 11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

*Anyone not found written in the Book of Life will be thrown in the lake of fire (Rev 20:15)*

15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

*Unbelief will keep some out of God's eternal rest (Heb 3:18-19)*

18 And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? 19 So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

### **Seeking Redemption and Rescue (Luke 16:27-31)**

27 "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, 28 for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' 29 Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' 30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

### **Plan proposed (27-28)**

*When the proposal is for God to warn, people will not listen (Jer 11:7-8)*

7 From the time I brought your forefathers up from Egypt until today, I warned them again and again, saying, "Obey me." 8 But they did not listen or pay attention; instead, they followed the stubbornness of their evil hearts. So I brought on them all the curses of the covenant I had commanded them to follow but that they did not keep."

*When the proposal is for prophets to warn, people will not listen (Jer 25:3-5)*

3 For twenty-three years — from the thirteenth year of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah until this very day — the word of the Lord has come to me and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened. 4 And though the Lord has sent all his servants the prophets to you again and again, you have not listened or paid any attention.

*When the proposal is those who desire to protect, people will not listen (Matt 23:37)*

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.

*When the proposal is for a Son to warn, people will not listen (Matt 21:33-40)*

33 "Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. 34 When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. 35 "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. 36 Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. 37 Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. 38 "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' 39 So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

## **Plan rejected (29-31)**

*Rejected because one is saved through the Name of Jesus (Acts 4:12)*

12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

*Rejected because one is saved by coming through Jesus (John 14:6)*

6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

*Rejected because one is saved by being in Jesus (1 John 5:12)*

12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

*Rejected because one is saved by the gospel (1 Cor 15:2)*

2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

*Rejected because one is saved by faith (Eph 2:8)*

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—

*Rejected because one is saved by the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5)*

5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

## **Conclusion and Other Thoughts**

### **Concluding Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh**

#### **The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31)**

Two very important charges have been laid down against the scoffing Pharisees in verses 15-18:

(1) They have sought the approval of men (based upon what men can see—appearances), not of God (based upon the heart).

(2) They have set aside the revelation of God, which exposes the heart.

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus graphically illustrates both of these points:

19 "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 hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and

saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. 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.' 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 fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' 27 "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, 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.'"

In dealing with this passage, I will divide it into three sections: (1) the rich man and Lazarus in life—vv. 19-21; (2) the rich man and Lazarus after death—vv. 22-23; (3) the rich man's requests—vv. 24-31.

#### *The Rich Man and Lazarus in Life (vs. 19-21)*

Verse 19 begins almost identically with verse 1: "There was a certain rich man ... " This rich man "had it made." Jesus' description of his life is incredibly similar to the fate of the one on whom Jesus pronounced woes in his Sermon on the Mount (Luke 6:20-26). So, too, with Lazarus. He epitomized all that Jesus called "blessed." Failing to name the rich man is typical of parables, and the naming of Lazarus is unique. This name means "the one God helps."

The rich man was wealthy, and enjoyed all the benefits of his wealth. He was magnificently dressed. We get the impression that his wardrobe was filled with expensive garments. He ate well, and he lived happily. Life was good to this man. From all appearances, and from a superficial reading of Deuteronomy 28, this man, the Pharisees would have supposed, was a righteous man. Surely he would go to heaven when he died.

Lazarus was the exact opposite. He was a poor man, a virtual beggar. He was placed by the gate to the rich man's house. His clothing is not described, but we can well imagine how bad it was. His food was whatever scraps he might get from the rich man's garbage—fighting off the dogs to beat them to the food. He had sores and these the dogs licked. He was precisely the kind of person that the Pharisees would brand a "sinner," a man whom, in their minds, was worthy of hell.

These two men lived in close proximity to each other. I believe that Lazarus was in close enough proximity to this rich man's living quarters that he could see the entourage of people coming and going. He could hear the laughter. He could smell the aroma of the sumptuous meals being prepared in the kitchen. He knew what he was missing.

And if Lazarus was painfully aware of the bounty and blessings of the rich man, but evidently not a sharer in them, so, too, the rich man had to have been aware of the pathetic plight of Lazarus. He would have had to walk past Lazarus every time he left or entered his house. This means that he would have had to have consciously chosen to ignore his need. The rich man thus used his wealth to indulge himself, but not to minister to the needy. This was a clear violation of the Old Testament standard of righteousness.

Based upon appearance alone, one could see how the Pharisees would have judged these two men. They would have justified the rich man and condemned Lazarus. The fate of these two men after their deaths shows man's judgment to be wrong. Thus, their destiny after death will illustrate our Lord's indictment against the Pharisees above, namely that they sought to be justified before men, according to appearances, rather than before God, based upon the heart.

#### *The Rich Man and Lazarus in Eternity (vv. 22-23)*

It was only after both men died that God's judgment was evident. Here, the roles of the two men are almost exactly reversed. Now, it is the rich man who is in torment, and Lazarus who is blessed. The change occurred at the deaths of the two. On earth, one can imagine that the rich man had a very ostentatious funeral. Lazarus' funeral would have been basic. It is even possible that his body may have been cast onto a dung or refuse heap. From a heavenly viewpoint it was decidedly different. We are told that the soul of Lazarus was escorted to "Abraham's bosom." Of the rich man we are simply (even tersely) told that he died and was buried.

The identification of the place of Lazarus' above as "Abraham's bosom" is both interesting and highly significant. In our parable, Lazarus is not said to be in the presence of God, but in the bosom of Abraham. We must remember that this parable is told to an Israelite, for an Old Testament point of view. I believe that in Old

Testament times there was a kind of “holding place” for the souls of those who died. I believe this holding place had two separate compartments, so to speak. One was reserved for the righteous, the other for the unrighteous. Each compartment had its eternal counterpart. The above of the righteous had heaven as its eternal counterpart, while the place of the wicked was a prototype of hell. The rich man and Lazarus are thus each in their own place.

The place of Lazarus’ bliss was called “Abraham’s bosom.” From his place of torment, the rich man addresses Abraham as “Father Abraham.” I can almost see the faces of the Pharisees flinch as Jesus spoke the words “Father Abraham,” for this rich man thus addressed Abraham as his “father,” and Abraham called him “Child.” The Pharisees believed that all one needed to get into the kingdom of God was a birth certificate which proved they were a physical descendant of Abraham (cf. Luke 3:8). Here is a rich man, an offspring of Abraham, in hell (or rather, its prototype). What a striking way to remind the Jews that being a physical descendant of Abraham was not a guarantee of one’s salvation.

The place of bliss was “Abraham’s bosom.” I believe that we may find a clue to the meaning of this expression in Matthew 8:11:

“And I say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline at table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God” (Matthew 8:11; cp. Luke 13:29).

Lazarus was represented as reclining in Abraham’s bosom. The occasion when a man would lean on the bosom or breast of another was at the meal table, as John did with our Lord (cf. John 13:23, 25; 21:20). Thus, it may well be that Lazarus is being portrayed as reclining at a banquet meal with Abraham.

The circumstances of the rich man and Lazarus are thus almost exactly reversed after death. The rich man, who lived in luxury, now lived in agony. He was distant from Abraham’s bosom, but was aware of what was taking place there. Lazarus, who had suffered greatly in his life now was in bliss. While he had struggled in order to get the scraps from the rich man’s table, now he reclined at Abraham’s table, leaning on his bosom! While it was formerly Lazarus who looked upon the bounty of the rich man, but did not share in it, now it is the rich man who beholds Lazarus in bounty and blessing.

It would seem that the rich man’s “hell” is something like solitary confinement in a prison. There may be others there with you, but you are hardly aware of them, nor is there any real fellowship. What you are aware of is the bliss of the righteous. It is as though hell has a one-way picture window, and each resident of hell is given a pair of binoculars. The wicked are thus enabled to see the joy and bliss of the righteous, but it appears that the righteous are unaware of the suffering of the wicked. The wicked can see out, but the righteous cannot see in, so to speak.

#### *The Rich Man’s Requests (vv. 24-31)*

It would be easy to think that the bulk of the parable might be devoted to a description of the bliss of Lazarus and the agony of the rich man. In fact, the larger portion of the parable is devoted to two requests which are made by the rich man. Before we look more closely at these requests, take note of several observations. First, both requests were denied. Second, the first request of the rich man had to do with his personal comfort, while the second was for the eternal well-being of his immediate family (his five brothers). Third, both of his requests are that Abraham send Lazarus to do something. In my opinion, the rich man still looks down upon Lazarus, viewing him as a kind of servant, not as a superior.

The rich man’s first request was the result of his torment, his suffering. The flames were causing him great discomfort. He pled for mercy, asking that Lazarus be sent to him with the smallest quantity of water, to cool his tongue.

His petition was denied, based on two factors. First, the rich man’s fate was a just one. He had gotten just what he had deserved. He had his “good things” in life. Now, justice demanded that he get what he deserved. His suffering was a just penalty. Justice would not allow Abraham to diminish his suffering. Second, hell and heaven are divided, with no access between the two. There was, Abraham said, a great fixed chasm, located between the two abodes. The wicked could not cross over to the place of blessing, and the righteous could not (to show mercy, such as to take water to the suffering) cross over to the place of the wicked. Thus, the rich man’s petition must be denied. Hell is the irreversible destiny of some, with the choice of entering it being made in one’s life.

The rich man's second request still involves the service of Lazarus, but this time he does not request that Lazarus ease his suffering, but that Lazarus go to his five brothers to warn them not to come to this place. The rich man now understands that men's choices must be made before death, and that their decisions remain after their deaths.

Abraham responded negatively to the second request, as well as to the first. There was no need for someone to be sent from the grave to warn the lost. Moses and the Prophets served this purpose well. Let the lost listen to the Old Testament revelation. That, Abraham maintained, should serve as a sufficient warning.

The rich man protested, however. He insisted that while men may not heed the Old Testament Scriptures, they could not ignore the message of a man who had returned from death. They thought that "signs and wonders" could do more than the Word of God. This is but a continuation of the request that Jesus prove Himself by performing some miracle as a proof of His person and His power.

Abraham's answer was short and pointed. He said that if his brothers refused to listen to Moses and the Prophets, they would not be convinced by a spectacular appearance from the grave. There is a very significant principle underlying this answer. Man's failure to believe is not due to any lack of evidence, but due to a closed heart, determined to disbelieve any amount of evidence. The problem, to put it differently, was not a lack of external evidence (appearances), but a willful rebellion of the heart against God. The hearts of this man and his five brothers were unbelieving. Such unbelief was not solved by a preponderance of the evidence, but only by a change in the heart. Once again, the outward appearances are not the issue, but the heart is.

Jesus would soon be crucified, and He would soon rise from the dead. That empty tomb in Jerusalem did not result in a host of conversions, for it was not appearances which were the problem, but the closedness of men's hearts. If men were to believe in Christ for Salvation, they would have to believe in the Christ of which the Old Testament Scriptures foretold. Thus, when Peter preached his Pentecost sermon, he grounded his preaching on the Old Testament Scriptures, on the "Law and the Prophets" (cf. Acts 2:16-36).

*(Adapted from URL: <https://bible.org/seriespage/rich-man-and-lazarus-luke-1614-31>)*

## **Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Jesus' opponents fancied themselves to be experts in the Law of Moses and the books of the prophets. They sought to apply those laws zealously to every aspect of life. In that process, however, they lost sight of the God who gave the law. They became deaf and blind to his initiatives. Standing before them was the greatest of God's prophets—and more. He stood head and shoulders above Moses and the prophets. God was present in the world as he has not been before. In Jesus all the law and the prophets come to fulfillment. Yet many Pharisees and teachers of the law did not see this. Their love of power and wealth left them insensitive. So when Jesus rose from the dead, many still did not believe. Those who looked down on the poor could justify their attitude by misreadings of texts such as Proverbs 13:18; 20:4; 24:33, 34; etc. In ignoring the physically needy, they missed seeing the most spiritually needy: themselves.

When we see need around us, what comes to our minds? Gratitude that we are not in their situation? Memory of what it was like to be in need? A sense of annoyance? A sense of responsibility? A sense of opportunity? A mixture of these? Jesus' story reminds us that regardless of our circumstances, we are all people in need. Before we label someone else as "needy," we first ought to see ourselves that way. We are not self-sufficient. Even as we live as responsible, productive citizens, we do not make it on our own. We depend on God for everything, especially eternal life. One day we will stand before him either to receive that great gift or to be consigned to eternal ruin for rejecting it. Today's text offers a solemn call to listen and repent now, before it's too late.

## **Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary**

1. When we have the opportunity, we should help those who are in need (Luke 16:19-21 ;cf. Gal. 6:10)
2. When we are in turmoil, the slightest gesture of kindness can be a great relief (Luke 16:22-24)
3. One day, all people will be held accountable for their actions (vss. 25-26)
4. We should tell our loved ones about Jesus while we still can (vss. 27-28)
5. The Word of God contains everything we need to know about salvation (vss. 29-30)
6. If a person's heart is closed off to God, the greatest miracle will have no effect on him (vs. 31)