

Luke 16:19-31; I Tim. 6:17-18; Rich man and Lazarus I. Opening Contrast II. Concluding Contrast III. Sobering Application

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, if you had to guess which topic Jesus spoke on the most- what would you say? Prayer, or faith perhaps? Well, did you know that in Jesus' parables Jesus speaks about money and its proper use in 11 out of 40 parables. In these parables, Jesus use money to press to the heart- in fact our view of and use of money reveals the state of our heart! How we use worldly wealth reveals our priorities- what we think is important and lasting. This fact reveals a pressing danger of our society- we are taught that we should work and save for retirement- so that we can stop working and spend our money on the things we really want to do as soon as possible! However, today we see that how we view and use money in this life has direct consequences for the life that is to come. The parable of our text is unique in that we are not told it is a parable. It is also unique in that the poor man get a name. So is this a true event or a picture of what could happen? The fact remains, the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil as we will see. It is safe to say that many in our world know more about the markets than the Word of God. Wealth distracts us- pleasures pacify us- so that we don't see the pressing need for repentance towards God and mercy towards our neighbor. So today we see that Jesus reveals the dramatic contrast of the rich man and Lazarus to teach us proper priorities.

I. Opening Contrast

Jesus begins his illustration by forming a striking contrast. We start with the rich man in v. 19. He wore fine clothes- scarlet and linen apparel. And he lived in a large house with servants and plenty of food- dining lavishly as v. 19 concludes. Every day, this man had more than he could want. He lived and dined as a king- enjoying royal pleasures. He owns land and a mansion- growing fat and sleek. Entertained by singers and dining with rich and powerful companion. But as lavish as his lifestyle is, he shows no mercy, care or concern for those who are in need. No love for fellow man. In contrast to this rich man is a poor man- named Lazarus. The name Lazarus means- God helps. But this man has little help from

anyone. He is clothed in rags and has nothing to eat. He has to be carried and he is laid by the gate of this rich man. Lazarus is so hungry he would gladly eat the crumbs from the rich man's table- but no one gives him anything. Added to this, he is covered with painful sores and his only companion is a pack of wild dogs. In the context of Luke 16 as a whole, what we find here is that the rich man has not used his wealth to make eternal friends. Rather, the rich man served mammon and not God. So where your treasure is- there your heart will be also!

II. Concluding Contrast

In v. 22 we find the dramatic reversal- the contrast between the former and the latter life. Both died- but that is where the similarities end. The poor man is carried to the Abraham's side- or placed in Abraham's embrace. Instead of being laid in the streets- He passing through the gates of pearl and is laid in Abraham's bosom. Instead of being accompanied by dogs- Lazarus is accompanied by angels! For the Jewish believer, Abraham's bosom is another name for the joy of heaven. Remember this story is told before Jesus ascended into heaven- and for the OT believer there was the hope of being welcomed into father Abraham's presence. Being a son of Abraham meant that you were like father Abraham who lived by faith and not by sight! This is describing the intermediate state- for those who lived by faith- these will be welcomed into a place of joy, comfort and delight! As v. 25 puts it- Lazarus is comforted here. Not so, the rich man. After death, he loses everything. V. 23 puts this man in a place of torment- fire and anguish. Called Hades- the place of the dead- where riches do you no good. He has no companions, no joy, and no comfort. Between these two a great chasm is fixed. There is no hope or possibility of passing between the two. For the rich man, there is no opportunity for mercy or any release from this torment. We would call this intermediate state the place of hell. The fact is, the judge of the earth will do what is right. For those who are poor towards God and rich towards themselves- those who refuse to show mercy to those in need- these will in the end be left with nothing. They will be left to their own devices- with endless regret and pain. He is reduced to begging- having nothing of

his own- asking for pity from Abraham when he refused to have pity on Lazarus. It is surprising to many people, of all the people in the Bible- Jesus is the one who spoke about hell the most. So hell is a real place where people suffer. After death, your soul is either carried to glory by the angels or your soul is cast into hades where there is weeping, fire and torment. But for those who have a faith like Abraham- there is the promise of Joy, comfort and peace in the presence of God!

III. Sobering Application

Now that Jesus has established this stark contrast, we conclude with 3 points of application. What is Jesus teaching us in this short story? The first application is this, earthly riches cannot ransom a person's soul. As Psalm 49 puts it, those who trust in their wealth and boast in the riches, learn this! Truly no man can give to God the price of his life. The ransom is too costly and wealth will never suffice. The fact is, earthly treasures cannot be used purchase your entrance into glory or to get your soul out of hell. If you are poor towards God, you will end up with nothing. Remember, whatever you have you have received- your talents and treasures are gifts from God! God knows your heart, and if you love and trust mammon you will reap the consequences! Rather, use your money to glorify God and serve fellow man- with an eye to the promised future. Your earthly things can be quickly washed away- think of those living in the Bahamas after this hurricane. What do they have left? As we read in I Tim. 6- do not set your hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. Do good- and be rich in good works- be generous and ready to share. The 2nd application is drawn from the permanence of this division between heaven and hell. As v. 26 puts it, there is a chasm fixed so that none can pass between. In other words, once you are in hell- you will remain there forever. Even after the resurrection, you will not escape your punishment. After this life comes judgement, you will not receive a second chance! What you do in this life- how you use your gifts and whom you trust- has eternal consequences! So live sober and godly lives- there are no do-overs! What man exalts holds little weight with the Lord! How many men have no regard for eternity- how many think of the life that is to

come? And finally, the third application is found in v. 29. Judgement is based on your response to the Word of God. For this rich man, Moses and the Prophets were sufficient to reveal the need for faith and repentance. If they will not heed the words of the OT- then they will not be impressed even if someone would rise from the dead. No supernatural sign or wonder will convince someone to believe in God if they have already rejected His Word. Moses and the Prophets spoke of the coming Christ- and now that Christ was in their midst- but even a resurrection would not convince them to believe! How do we know this? Well, we have two examples of people who did rise from the dead. Think of Lazarus- Jesus' friend- who was raised from the dead. How did the rulers respond? By trying to kill both Lazarus and Jesus! Think also what would happen in a few months- Jesus would die and rise again Himself? Will everyone believe in Him? No- as Rom. 10 puts it, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God proclaimed. This fact points to the sufficiency of Scripture. If the OT is sufficient- how much more the complete canon? In the Bible we read of the only way to salvation- by repenting of our sins and trusting in Jesus Christ! That is the only way to flee the coming wrath! Salvation is found in no other name- and by no other means! No earthly treasures or worldly mammon can atone for your soul! Nothing but the precious blood of Lamb and save you from your sins! And this is the Jesus that is proclaimed to you!

To conclude, this short story of Lazarus and the rich man quickly reveals the proper emphasis we should place on worldly riches. Use them to serve fellow man and bring glory to God- use them to gain eternal friends- and refuse to put your hope in them. For money withers and wealth fades, but the Word of the Lord endures forever! Jesus reveals the dramatic contrast of the rich man and Lazarus to teach us proper priorities. Our parable concludes with Lazarus reclining with Abraham- together enjoying the feast promised to those who trust in the Anointed One. We now have the opportunity to come to this feast as well- to receive the bread of life for free- with no need for money. You cannot earn a place at this table- rather you are bid come, take an eat- come and drink- receive what I graciously give you! For all who dine with Jesus by faith here below, will dine with Him in glory by sight in the world to come!