

**Lesson #3-27*****The Rich Man and Lazarus***

Luke 16:19-31

**Key Verse:**

But Abraham said, "Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony."

Luke 16:25

**The Point:**

God cares and provides for those the world has abandoned and neglected, and we are called to take part in what God is doing.

***What?! Well, You See...***

*An inquisitive listener interrupts today's story.*

**Reader 1:** "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen—"

**Reader 2:** Wait, what? Was there really?

**Reader 1:** Oh, sorry. It was a story Jesus was telling. There wasn't really a rich man.

**Reader 2:** Why?

**Reader 1:** Well, you see, some people who loved money had been criticizing Jesus for the way he talked about money. And so Jesus told this story: "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen, and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores..."

**Reader 2:** Wait, what? Covered in sores? That's kind of disgusting.

**Reader 1:** It was! But you see, there were a number of people in Jesus' day that suffered from various skin diseases. It wasn't uncommon, but it was pretty disgusting—and they weren't allowed to be near other people, in case it was contagious. So, "at the rich man's gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores."

**Reader 2:** That's REALLY disgusting.

**Reader 1:** It was! And those dogs weren't fluffy household pets—they were mange-covered street dogs. It was pretty disgusting all around.

**Reader 2:** It's kind of disgusting that the rich man didn't give Lazarus anything to eat, either.

**Reader 1:** I'm getting to that. See, Jesus' story continues: "The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried."

**Reader 2:** Hang on—are you saying that Lazarus was physically carried away?

**Reader 1:** It's a story, not an exact picture.

**Reader 2:** And who is Abraham? Isn't he the stars guy?

**Reader 1:** Absolutely correct! Abraham was a man chosen by God thousands of years before Jesus to be the father of many children. His children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren became the people of Israel, the Jewish people.

**Reader 2:** Wow, so getting to be with Abraham in heaven would be a pretty big deal. He's like the founder of the faith.

**Reader 1:** Exactly.

**Reader 2:** So what happened to the rich guy?

**Reader 1:** Well, Jesus' story goes on: "In Hades, where the rich man was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side."

**Reader 2:** Wait, what? You can see heaven from hell?

**Reader 1:** Well, first of all, it's just a story. It's not the exact geography of the afterlife. And it's important to note that Jesus doesn't use the words heaven and hell—he says "by Abraham's side" and "in Hades."

**Reader 2:** I thought Hades was hell.

**Reader 1:** It's a bit difficult to explain, since Hades was a Greek idea of the afterlife and this is a story being told to and about Jewish people.

**Reader 2:** Okay, go on.

**Reader 1:** "The rich man called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.'"

**Reader 2:** Wow.

**Reader 1:** Wow, what?

**Reader 2:** That's pretty rude. The rich man never did a thing for Lazarus in life, and now in death he's treating him like a servant. Lazarus is finally getting a break, but the rich man wants him to come into a pit full of fire just to take care of him.

**Reader 1:** Exactly right—Jesus goes on: "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony.'"

**Reader 2:** That doesn't seem totally fair. I mean, it's fair that Lazarus is finally being treated well, but it's not fair for the rich guy to suffer *forever*.

**Reader 1:** Well, you're right. It's hard to say if he was going to suffer forever, though. Many Jewish people thought that the afterlife was sort of a holding place, a place for waiting until the world was restored to God's original hope for it.

**Reader 2:** So maybe the rich man would get another chance to treat Lazarus like a fellow human instead of someone below him.

**Reader 1:** Well, the story goes on: "Then the rich man asked, 'Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.'"

**Reader 2:** Huh. It's nice that he wants to warn his brothers, but I think it's kind of mean that he's warning them just so they will escape torment. I feel like he should be warning them not to ignore the poor and needy, you know?

**Reader 1:** Right on. The story continues: "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.'"

**Reader 2:** They have them, like, literally?

**Reader 1:** No, they have the writings of Moses and the prophets—the books of the Hebrew Bible, or what we call the Old Testament.

**Reader 2:** Oh, okay. So what did the rich guy say?

**Reader 1:** "He said, 'No, Father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' Abraham said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

**Reader 2:** Is that the end?

**Reader 1:** That's the end.

**Reader 2:** I feel like Jesus was going somewhere with that "if someone rises from the dead" thing.

**Reader 1:** I think you might just be right.



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