

The Rich Man And Poor Lazarus..

Text: Luke 16:19-31

1) In this life

Suggested Hymns:

2) In yonder life

170 R&S, 303, 304, 291, 368

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 16:19–31, 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.*

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 [hell], 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.’*

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.’”* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

This Gospel contains one of the most remarkable sayings of our Lord, such thoughts as the most talented mind of sinful, mortal man could never think of. Jesus spoke as never a man spoke. His discourses bear the divine mark. It is God who explains to us the relations between this life and the world to come in this narrative of the rich man and poor Lazarus.

Let us consider with the help of God's Holy Spirit, *The Rich Man And Poor Lazarus*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. In This Life

“There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.” The name of this rich man is not mentioned. He had all that a worldling striving for pleasures and enjoyments could wish for. He occupied a beautiful mansion, for we are told of the gates of his house, and this word is not used in the sense of common entrances, but gates were portals that led into grand palaces.

His coffers were certainly filled with gold and silver, or else he would not have had the means to fare as sumptuously as he did. And we must observe that he was not a miser. A miser will hoard his money and himself go in rags as if he was a poor man.

This rich man did not store away his riches for the purpose merely of possessing them. He made use of his money. He dressed according to his means, clothing himself in purple and fine linen. A miser generally shuns company, lives for himself, and in their miserly conduct some have even starved themselves to death.

Not so this rich man. He fared sumptuously every day. His table was laden with delicacies. He had hosts of friends. His mansion was often the scene of joyous revelry. Every day brought him new enjoyments. For him the sparkling cup of life was filled to overflowing. There was no trouble for him. He enjoyed life to his heart's fullest content.

Let us take leave of this “fortunate of mortals” and depart from his house. What is it we see crouching at his door? 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.”*

What a contrast! A beggar, and full of sores, too, lying at the rich man's gate! Oh what an opportunity for the Rich man to make good use of his wealth! Daily, or as often as he leaves and enters his house, his eyes see that bunch of misery and want, heaped up before his very door.

Lazarus was not an idle, lazy fellow, who begged because he did not like to work. He became a beggar by necessity. He could not work, for he was ill and full of sores.

Most likely he was not even able to walk, for he was laid at the rich man's gate; he was cast down there by some one in order to give him a chance to snatch up the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.

What an opportunity for the rich man to assist a poor, afflicted wretch! Does he do that? Not in the least. Not a trace of humane feeling seems to be harboured in his heart. He sees poor Lazarus' misery day after day, the disgusting sight of the beggar's sores meets his eye, he hears the man groaning and moaning, but poor Lazarus must shift for himself; the rich man has nothing left for him.

Poor Lazarus! No home, no comfort, no medical help, no friends, except those among the ruffians. "*Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.*" They applied to him the remedy which they use for their own sores.

What a difference between the rich man and Lazarus in this life! But there is an end to this life. We read, "*So it was that the beggar died.*" Death put an end to his misery. There ends the temporal career of poor Lazarus. No mention is made of his burial. Probably the rich man's servants disposed of the body, reluctantly bore it to the potter's field, and there dumped it into a hole without shedding a tear over the remains.

But it is not the poor man's lot only to die. "*The rich man also died.*" Also! Wealth is no barrier against death. In the midst of his sumptuous banquets, his revelries and pleasures, most likely in the prime of life, the rich man is called hence.

Death lays his icy hand upon the victim, and there is no escape. The best doctors were certainly called to the bedside of the dying man, and it is not improbable that he offered them a great portion of his wealth if they succeeded in saving his life. But their skill was at an end, for his time was up.

The poor Rich man! He must succumb to the inevitable. He must leave his mansion, his luxuries, his enjoyments, and all the good things of this life, and breathe his last. He is stripped of his purple and fine linen and dressed in a shroud. And now we are told of something that was not even hinted at in the account of Lazarus' death. "***He was buried.***"

Buried — a great deal is contained in that word. He was buried in a manner becoming his station in life. There was a large funeral. With imposing ceremonies the mortal remains were conveyed to their last resting place for interment, an eloquent discourse was delivered praising the deceased, setting forth the good traits of his character, many tears were shed at the grave, and, to complete all, a costly monument was erected to his memory.

Thus closes the account of the rich man and poor Lazarus in this life. They both lie in the grave, having left the stage of this world.

2. In The Yonder Life.

But there is a world to come. There is a yonder life, a hereafter. In the second part of our Gospel the ever true Son of God discloses the true state of things in yonder life.

Of the rich man we are told, ²³ *And being in torments in [hell], 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.'*

The rich man in hell, in flames, in torments — what a terrible fate! What an abrupt change from joy to woe! And to augment his mournful condition, he sees Lazarus, the beggar Lazarus, in joy and bliss; for of him it is said, "***He was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom.***"

The question forces itself upon us here, "*Why was the rich man cast into hell? No great sin or crime of his is mentioned.*"

We are not told that he had committed murder or any evil deed. Was he cast into hell because he was rich? Was his wealth the sin that condemned him? Certainly not!

Abraham was a rich man, Job was a rich man and David was a rich man. Numbers of rich men are mentioned in the Bible, and in spite of their wealth they entered heaven. There is, indeed, great danger in wealth; for Christ once said, ***“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”***¹

Still, even the richest man can possess, as though he did not possess, and be saved by the grace and mercy of God. — And why was poor Lazarus taken into heaven? Because he was poor? Did his poverty open for him the gates of heaven? Certainly not!

Poverty brings nobody into eternal life. Neither was his purple and fine linen the real cause which led the rich man into hell, nor were his rags and sores the real cause which led poor Lazarus into heaven.

The only rule by which this question of heaven and hell is to be settled beyond dispute, is the divine truth, written in Mark 16:16, ***“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”***

The rich man lacked faith; he was an unbeliever. He was carnal-minded and unregenerated. His heart belonged to the world and not to God. He did not believe in the Messiah, the Saviour and Redeemer. This is evidenced by his selfish neglect to provide for poor Lazarus. True faith changes man’s heart and fills it with love to God and the neighbour.

A true believer could never let such an opportunity for doing good pass by as was that offered to the rich man. Faith abounds in good works.

The rich man did not believe Moses and the prophets; he did not believe in the divine inspiration and efficacy of the Holy Scriptures. Hear him arguing with Abraham. He says, ***“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.”***

Abraham answered him, ***“They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.”*** And what did the rich man reply? ***“No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.”***

He had evidently himself never experienced the converting and saving power of God’s Word, how, then, could he expect others to be saved by that Word?

In short, the rich man was a worldlying of the truest type. God's grace, forgiveness of sins, life and salvation, spiritual matters in general — these were things for which he never cared. He provided for his mortal body only, but not for his immortal soul. This unbelief was the real cause of his condemnation. It was manifested in his demeanour, his behaviour, manner, and conduct

And why was poor Lazarus saved? Through faith, by grace. Lazarus was a true believer. His very name indicates this. There must certainly be some reason why Christ withholds from us the name of the rich man, and tells us that the poor man's name was Lazarus.

His name is significant. Lazarus means, "*God, my help.*" Lazarus relied on and trusted in the living God and Saviour. Patiently he bore his cross, never murmuring, because he considered himself a poor damnable sinner, never wavering in his faith unto the end; and thus he entered into eternal bliss.

We say, into eternal bliss, for whoever is taken into heaven will remain there forever. And whoever is cast into hell will forever stay in that dreadful place of torment. There is no purgatory. There is no second chance for repentance in a future world.

For what did Abraham answer when the rich man asked for Lazarus to come over and soothe him? He 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.*" What folly, then, to neglect to provide for your immortal soul in this life, and to expect to find some sort of a chance for repentance in the world to come! What folly to live in this world as the rich man did!

Note that the brothers of the rich man have not died out to this day. How many thousands walk in his footsteps, abusing their wealth, showing no mercy to the poor, denying the existence of heaven and hell, and viewing the grave as the end of all things. They will find out their mistake in due time; but then it will be too late.

Do not tell me, if God wants to show miracles, as in days of yester year, then people would set their affection on things above and prepare for the

hereafter. This was the very thought of the rich man in hell. He thought, if his brothers would see a dead man return and tell them about heaven and hell, they would repent.

But what did Abraham answer him? ***“If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.”*** Whoever, therefore, cannot be induced by this book, by the Bible, to set his affection on things above, to believe in Jesus Christ the Saviour who bled and died on the cross for all people, he will not be converted by thousands of miracles.

Christ performed many great miracles. And did the Pharisees and scribes believe in Him? No! As we read in Romans 1:16, ***the gospel of Christ, ... is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes***, and if a person is not saved by the Word of the Gospel, there is nothing in heaven or upon earth that will make him repent.

Let us follow the advice of our Saviour, written in John 5:39, ***³⁹ You search the Scriptures, for in them you ... you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.*** And by the grace of God, when our time has come, we will be with the Lord in eternal bliss. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Matthew 19:24