

Are you rich or poor?

“The Parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus”



“And Jesus saith unto them, ‘Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?’” Matthew 21:16

In the Scripture before this parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Christ had been talking to the people about stewardship. His concern was not about the amount of money, but how the money was being used. He had told the people many stories about landlords and debtors. He had talked with Zacchaeus, the tax collector, and a poor woman had taken perfume and poured it on His feet.

During his life of earth, the rich man had everything he wanted. At his gate, there was a poor man named Lazarus who just wanted something to eat. We are told he would have been satisfied with what fell on the floor from the rich man’s tables. He was in such bad shape that even the dogs came and licked his sores. But the rich man had no time for him. After a while the rich man and Lazarus both died. We are told that Lazarus went to be with Abraham. The rich man went to Hades where he was suffering. Lazarus never says a word in this story, but he is the victor. He has been given eternal life. The rich man is in so much agony that he asks. “Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.” Luke 16:24. He still didn’t understand. He still wanted Lazarus to be his servant. But he was told that was not going to happen. There was a great gulf between them now. At one time, Lazarus was just outside his door, but now there was no way they were going to be close enough for Lazarus to help him.

He was frustrated. Then he asked that someone go and tell his brothers who were still on earth about God so they wouldn’t have the torment he had. Then Abraham spoke up and said “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.” Luke 16:29. The rich man was not satisfied with that response; he wanted someone to rise from the dead and go to them. After all they wouldn’t believe if it was just someone who was still on earth. How often we are guilty of the same thing. Many people can tell us about the love of Christ, but we sometimes ignore them because they are not important. We want someone special to speak to us. How often are children told to keep quiet and not speak until they are spoken to? Sometimes those children are very aware of what is going on and can see things we do not wish to see. Lazarus had the faith of God as Christ said we must have to be saved.

To our understanding, no one was raised from the dead to seek out the rich man's brothers. Abraham simply told the rich man that they wouldn't believe that person either. They had Moses and the prophets. That may seem harsh, but we just have to apply it to our lives today. We are hard pressed to find anyone who has not been exposed to the love of God. But do they believe the words of love they are told? Have they accepted Christ as their personal Saviour, or are they doomed as the rich man? Are they waiting for someone special to tell them? God sent His son to die for each one of us. If we pray for Christ to forgive our sins, our sins will be washed away "whiter than snow." We are all important whether we are rich or poor.

In Proverbs 19:1 we are told "Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool." Many times we are foolish. Many times we speak before we think. That does not mean that we are going to Hell, but we do need to be aware of denying the love of Christ.

This parable is not about money. It is about roots and where our faith and lives are rooted. It is about our conviction. The rich man and Lazarus had changed places and nothing could be changed. Lazarus who never said a word was the rich one. The rich man was very poor and in agony. His money and fine clothes were worth nothing. Our social status on earth has nothing to do with our spiritual status before God.

We are led to believe that while the rich man was on earth, he never even spoke to Lazarus let alone give him a bit of food. But now he called Lazarus by name and wanted him to serve him by giving him just a drop of water. My how things changed! The rich man had earthly wealth, but now he was poor. His wealth that he could have shared with Lazarus couldn't help him now.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have given us every opportunity to know Your love and receive the gift of eternal life with You, but we often stray and want to have things our way. We often like the good life we are living and lose sight of what You want us to do. Help us to see those in need and reach out to show Your love to everyone from the poor to the rich, from those of a "low status" to those in high places. Help us to seek Your will for our lives daily. Amen

1. How can we have the faith of a child?
2. How do we compare to the rich man? To Lazarus?
3. How much do we take for granted?
4. Are we ever too busy to notice the screams of human desperation?
5. Do we ever hide behind our gates and try to shut out the world we don't want to see?
6. What is meant by "Money is a resource, not a reward?"

The Rich Man and Lazarus

“There once was a rich man, expensively dressed in the latest fashions, wasting his days in conspicuous consumption. A poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, had been dumped on his doorstep. All he lived for was to get a meal from scraps off the rich man’s table. His best friends were the dogs who came and licked his sores. Then he died, this poor man, and was taken up by the angels to the lap of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell and in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham in the distance and Lazarus in his lap. He called out, ‘Father Abraham, mercy! Have mercy! Send Lazarus to dip his finger in water to cool my tongue. I’m in agony in this fire.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that in your lifetime you got the good things and Lazarus the bad things. It’s not like that here. Here he’s consoled and you’re tormented. Besides, in all these matters there is a huge chasm set between us so that no one can go from us to you even if he wanted to, nor can anyone cross over from you to us.’ The rich man said, ‘Then let me ask you, Father: Send him to the house of my father where I have five brothers, so he can tell them the score and warn them so they won’t end up here in this place of torment.’ Abraham answered, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets to tell them the score. Let them listen to them.’ ‘I know, Father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but they’re not listening. If someone came back to them from the dead, they would change their ways.’ Abraham replied, ‘If they won’t listen to Moses and the Prophets, they’re not going to be convinced by someone who rises from the dead.’” Luke 16:19-31

