

The Parable of the Rich Man & Lazarus

(Luke 16:19-31)

Key characters and elements:

- Rich man (not named; some tradition says his name was Dives)
- Lazarus the beggar (NOT the Lazarus that Jesus raised from the dead). Note: Lazarus holds distinction as being the only character in all of Jesus' parables that He names. Lazarus means "the one who God helps".
- Abraham
- "Abraham's side" (i.e. Paradise aka Heaven; some day this existing Heaven will be transformed into the eternal new Heaven and New Earth described in Revelation chapters 21 & 22)
- Hell [i.e. the part of Hades for the Lost aka as Gehenna; some day Hades will be cast into the eternal Lake of Fire (eternal Hell) described in Revelation chapter 20]

Background:

On Earth

There was a rich man who lived a life of self indulgence and cares about no one but himself. He lives a life of leisure, feasting, luxury and constant pleasure. Not only did he wear expensive and showy clothes, he even wore rare and expensive underwear! (Note: purple was a sign of royalty or immense wealth; purple dye was very expensive and came from a species of mussel known as the purple fish).

He disregarded God and His word and ignored the poor and the needy - including lowly Lazarus who was brought to the rich man's gate to beg for leftover food. He also ignored the weekly Sabbath. He also thought that being a descendant of Abraham guaranteed his salvation.

Lazarus was very poor, in bad health including having a skin disease, unable to walk, hungry and very skinny. Besides the physical challenges and pain, think about the psychological and emotional pain of knowing that many people looked down at you.

Lazarus was evidently a kind and humble man (a "gentle soul") who had friends that would daily carry him to the rich man's gate; the dogs who were looked down upon and normally mean also liked Lazarus and would lick his sores to help comfort him. Ironically, the dogs showed more respect and treated Lazarus much more positively than the Rich Man!

Both men died. The rich man had a very expensive funeral – but then was placed into the sinner’s part of Hades (e.g. Gehenna or Hell). Lazarus was too poor for a funeral - but he was escorted to Paradise (Heaven) by angels.

In the After-Life

While the rich man is being tormented in Hades, he sees Lazarus over in Paradise. The Rich Man shows his true corrupt character in what he says and does:

- Does NOT apologize and ask for forgiveness; instead demands that Lazarus do services for him
- Treats Lazarus like a servant. He stills look down at Lazarus
- Does not even speak to Lazarus
- Plays the “race card” with Abraham
- Remains unrepentant and does not appeal to God for mercy and forgiveness (does appeal for help from Abraham)

In contrast Lazarus was quiet and humble in his days of suffering; he was also quiet in his days of power. He could have lorded it over the Rich Man but does not.

Contrast of the Rich Man versus Lazarus:

	<u>Rich Man</u>	<u>Lazarus</u>
Economic status	Upper/rich class (the 1%)	Lowest class; very poor
Earthly lifestyle	Luxurious; indulgent	Bare existence
Earthly possessions	Lots!	Clothes on his back
Physical health	Potentially (best foods)	Very poor health
Attitude	Proud	Humble
Eternal Home	Hell	Heaven

Key Learnings:

- We should follow the Great Commands to love God and love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:34-40)
- What we do with this life’s good gifts and pains of life matters now and for eternity
- God helps the humble; sometimes the help occurs in the life to come
- This life is not always fair; next life will be fair. There will be social justice some day.
- Earthly wealth has the power to corrupt. Beware of loving money.

- Problem is not wealth per se, but wealth used for self-indulgence and that ignores poverty and suffering.
- God's judgement is irrevocable. There is no "second chance" after we die, and the lost show no repentance.
- We will all live eternally. The big question is where.
- God's word is sufficient for people to be saved, not need people coming back from the dead. Even people see raised person from the dead, many will still not believe.
- Pride of our race, riches, status or power on earth is useless in the life to come
- We should show compassion for the poor and needy like Lazarus (help the beggar at our door step)
- The Parable destroys the false teaching that says wealth always is equated with God's blessing, and that suffering is God's punishment for us
- Appears that people in Hell are "alone"

Other Relevant Scriptures:

Matthew 6:19-24 (should lay up heavenly not earthly treasure; cannot serve God and Money)

I Timothy 6:6-11; 17-19 (don't love money; can't take it with you; pursue character development and good works)

Ecclesiastes 5:10-15 (money and possessions bring problems; can't take it with you)

Hebrews 9:27 (we die once, then face judgment; no second chance and no reincarnation)

Matthew 25:31-46 (important to help the poor & needy; when we help the poor & needy we are helping Jesus)

John 14:1-3 (Jesus is preparing a home for all His followers)

Revelation 20:11-15 (Hades will be cast into the eternal Hell aka Lake of Fire)

Revelation 21 & 22 (will be an eternal New Heaven & New Earth)

Parable of the Rich Fool