

Luke 16:19-31

- The Rich man and Lazarus -

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Introduction

- ❖ This is the only parable where one of the characters, besides Abraham, receives a name, “Lazarus.” This name has a Hebrew equivalent, “Eliezer”, which means “My God is helper.”
 - Some readers see a connection with the real-life Lazarus, who fell ill and died and was brought to life again (Jn 11:1-54). It is more feasible that the connection is incidentally, and not purposely.
- ❖ There are reasons to believe that the beggar received a name to enhance the meaning of the story.
 - When he was laid down at the entrance of the house of the rich, he received no help, not from the rich, and God? There is some tension between the meaning of his name and his actual situation.
 - Things change when he dies as a nameless beggar! But look, some angels carry him to heaven. He received a heavenly escort. He didn’t receive help from other people, but he is justified in heaven and admitted to the heavenly banquet.
 - After the rich man died, he is tormented, and he wants help from “heaven” to relieve his pain. So he is asking Abraham to send “God is my helper – Lazarus” to his place. There is no remorse, no repentance, he is still the rich man as he was on earth, ordering his servants, and perhaps believing that God was on his side.
 - His requests will not be fulfilled. Now he has a second request. He fears the fate of his own five brothers when they die. Wasn’t Lazarus his brother as a fellow Israelite also? He is still compassionate towards his brothers by blood.
 - The reply of Abraham is clear. They have the law and the prophets. And the law and the prophets are clear about assisting the poor.
- ❖ The main problem is revealed. The rich man and his brothers didn’t and continued not to obey the law and prophets, and they will be judged accordingly. The law and the prophets prescribe

the care for the poor. He will justify those who suffer and he will justify who take their responsibility (Read Matthew 25:31-46.

- This is not only the problem of these rich people.
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Gospel of Luke. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand-alone”. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

Context

- ❖ Why did Jesus tell this well-known parable? The answer might be found in Luke 16:13-15:
 - “No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.’ The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, ‘You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight.’”

Form and structure

- ❖ The outline of the Parable.

The Rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)	
A. Focus On earth – the background	
<i>Setting I (verse 19-21)</i>	¹⁹ “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. ²⁰ At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores ²¹ and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.
B. In heaven/hell – the story unfolds	
<i>Setting II (verse 22-23)</i>	²² “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.
<i>Discourse Part I</i>	²⁴ So he called to him,

<i>(verse 24-26)</i>	<p>'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'</p> <p>²⁵ "But Abraham replied,</p> <p>'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.</p> <p>²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'</p>
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A'. Focus On earth

<i>Discourse Part II (verse 27-31)</i>	<p>²⁷ "The Rich answered,</p> <p>'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, ²⁸ for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'</p> <p>²⁹ "Abraham replied,</p> <p>'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'</p> <p>³⁰ "he said,</p> <p>'No, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'</p> <p>³¹ "He said to him,</p> <p>'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"</p>
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❖ This story is full of opposites.

The Rich man		Lazarus
<p>¹⁹ "There was a rich man <i>(unnamed)</i> who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day.</p>	<p>< > < > < > < ></p>	<p>²⁰ At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores ²¹ and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table.</p>

Exposition

Remark

- ❖ It is not the intention of Jesus to inform us about (the details of) afterlife. He wants to show the listeners the decisive importance of obedience to the Word of God in this life.

Verse 19-21 (Setting 1; on earth – the background)

- ❖ **“There was a rich man.”** There is no connection with the preceding story. It seems that Luke collected these stories and placed them together.
- ❖ **“who was dressed in purple and fine linen.”** This man is dressed in very expensive clothing, available only to the happy few.
- ❖ **“and lived in luxury every day.”**
 - **“lived in luxury”** = “εὐφραίνω”: 2. **to be glad or delighted, be glad, enjoy oneself, rejoice, celebrate.**¹ See also Luke 15:23, 29, 32. **“λαμπρῶς”**: splendidly.²
 - **“every day”** is added to enhance the picture.
- ❖ **“At his gate.”** These houses had only one gate. Therefore, it was impossible not to see the beggar, while entering or leaving the house.
- ❖ **“was laid a beggar named Lazarus”**
 - **“was laid”** = “ἐβέβλητο.” This word is used in connection with physical disabilities (Mt 9:2; Mk 7:30; Rev 2:22; Mt 8:6, 14).³ He was laid down by others.
 - **“named Lazarus.”**
 - Lazarus is a rabbinic abbreviation of **“God’s help”** = **לְאָזָרָה**
 - This is the only time that a name is mentioned in a story or a parable. By using a name, the story becomes more vivid. We are informed that the rich man knew him by name (Lk 16:24). The fact that the beggar is called by a name and the rich man is unnamed, is also a sign that Lazarus is important to God. “He has human dignity.”⁵
 - Any relation with Lazarus, the friend of Jesus (Jn 11) is far-fetched, although incidentally, it is interesting that Jesus raised him from the dead.
 - There is no relation with Eliezer, the servant of Abraham (Gen 15: 2).

¹ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 414).

² Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 585).

³ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 163).

⁴ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 581).

⁵ Adeyemo, T. (2006, p. 1263).

- ❖ **“covered with sores.”** The contrast with the dress of the rich man is shocking.
- ❖ **“and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table.”** A servant could have brought him some left-overs. Instead of a servant, **“the dogs came and licked his sores.”**
 - In a sense, the dogs were feeding on Lazarus, licking the salty body fluids coming out of the sores.
- ❖ The story depicts the rich man who completely ignores the beggar, although he knew his name and saw him every day. His guests passed Lazarus while entering and leaving the house after they had enjoyed a splendid meal.

Verse 22-23 (Setting 2; in the afterlife; heaven/hell – the story unfolds)

- ❖ **“The beggar died.”** This time, his name is not used. The beggar has lost everything, even his name.
 - **“Angels.”** But, angels are present! See also Matthew 18:10: “See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. **For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.”**
- ❖ **“to Abraham’s side.”** This was a Biblical image for the afterlife, the heavenly banquet.
 - Matthew 8:11: **“I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”**
 - “There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out” (Lk 13:28).
 - **“Abraham”:**
 - John the Baptist warned: “And do not think you can say to yourselves, **‘We have Abraham as our father.’** I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham” (Mt3:9; Lk 13; 16; 19:9; Jn 8:39).
 - His righteousness: “What does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as **righteousness**’” (Rom 4:3; Gal 3:6). And: “And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone” (Jas 2:23, 24).
 - The blessing and the promises: “He redeemed us in order that **the blessing** given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive **the promise of the Spirit**” Gal 3:14; 3:9, 16).
- ❖ Verse 22 and 23 has a chiasmic structure ABCC’B’A’:
 - A. “The time came when **the beggar** died
 - B. and the angels carried him to **Abraham’s** side.
 - C. **The rich man** also died and was buried.

- C'. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up
 - B'. and saw Abraham far away,
- A'. with Lazarus by his side."
 - Within this ABCC'B'A'-structure the attention is drawn to the central part CC', describing the fate of the rich man.

❖ **"Lazarus"**

- At first, the beggar is introduced with the name Lazarus. When he dies, he is designated as "the beggar" without his name. And when the rich man looked up he saw Lazarus at the side of Abraham. He is no longer a beggar but the honorary guest at the side of Abraham.

Verse 24-26 (Discourse Part I)

❖ **"Father Abraham"** See above.

❖ **"have pity on me."**

- Have pity = "ἐλεέω": **to be greatly concerned about someone in need**, have compassion/mercy/pity.⁶
 - "If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent." (Mt 12:7; Hos 6:6; See also Lk 10:25-37 – the Good Samaritan; and Lk 11:29 below.)

❖ **"and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue."**

- The rich man shows no remorse. His mind has not changed at all. He had ignored the pain and hunger of Lazarus during his lifetime. Now, he is even asking father Abraham and Lazarus must be his servant. He is still the rich man as he was before, although he has lost everything.

❖ **"Because I am in agony in this fire."** See also Matthew 5:22.

❖ **"Remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things."** See Luke 6:24.

- **"Son"** or **"child"** (ESV): This address reflects the covenantal relationship.⁷
- **"Remember"** = "μνησκόμαι": 1. **to recall information from memory**, remember, recollect, remind oneself.⁸

⁶ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 315).

⁷ Bovon, F. (2013, p. 483).

⁸ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 652).

- This is a painful remembrance. The rich man has lost everything.
 - Psalm 49:16, 17: “Do not be overawed when a man grows rich, when the splendor of his house increases; for he will take nothing with him when he dies, his splendor will not descend with him.” (See also Ec 5:15 and 1 Tim 6:7.)
- ❖ **“between us and you a great chasm has been fixed.”** There is not a second chance after death. There will be no comfort for the rich man.
 - There was no chasm between the rich man and Lazarus on earth.
 - **“has been fixed”** = “στηρίζω”: 1. **to fix firmly in a place, set up, establish, support.**⁹ The passive might imply “by God.”
 - “Jesus uses this picture to depict the finality of eternity. With repentance, one can change the situation in this life. But once a person has died, nothing can be altered. Final judgment is just that—final! The saved and the lost will have no contact with each other for all of eternity, nor will their situations change. What we do in this life determines how we will spend eternity, and once this life is over, our eternal destiny is fixed.”¹⁰

Verse 27-31 (Discourse Part II)

- ❖ **“I have five brothers.”** The rich man is fearing the fate of his brothers when they do not repent. He feels compassion for the rich, where he was not compassionate towards the poor.“
- ❖ **“warn”** = “διαμαρτύρομαι”: generally to state something in such a way that the auditor is **to be impressed with its seriousness.**¹¹
- ❖ **“They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.”**
 - The rich man did not listen himself to Moses and the Prophets, and he knows that his brothers don’t listen too.
 - **“Moses and the Prophets”:**
 - “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? **Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe him,** and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?” (Isa 58:6, 7). See also Matthew 25:35, 36.

⁹ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 945).

¹⁰ Osborne, G. R. (2018, p. 402).

¹¹ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 233).

- “For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings” (Hos 6:6; Prov 21:3).
 - “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Mi 6:8)
- ❖ **“they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”** The request is refused. It will not work. If they don't listen to Moses and the Prophets today, they will not be convinced when someone rises from the dead. "The possibility is couched in terms of resurrection, rather than simply a messenger from the dead." “Miracles will not convince those whose hearts are morally blind and unrepentant; they will not be persuaded.”¹²

‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ “He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets,”

Application

Reading

- ❖ It is advisable to read this story aloud a couple of times. It is like a drama. Become part of it and visualize the story for yourselves. Get acquainted with all the opposites.
- ❖ Try to identify the causes why people don't respond to Christ:
 - They don't feel the urgency of repentance.
 - They want signs, wonders and miracles.
 - They are satisfied with their present lives.
 - They are afraid of the reactions of relatives, friends, society.
 -
- ❖ Identify the needs of the needy.

Praise

- ❖ Praise Christ for his:
 - Wisdom, righteousness and mercy (Law and the Prophets).
 - Teaching abilities by telling stories.
 - Call to repentance, to obedience and faith.

¹² Marshall, I. H. (1978, p. 639).

- There is a triple warning:
 - 1. Be aware of the judgment.
 - 2. Take the Word of God seriously.
 - 3. A miracle of a sign will not convince people.

This life and Afterlife

- ❖ The main point of this parable is not to console those like Lazarus with some hope of consolation in heaven. Rather its purpose is to listen to the word of Jesus and to act.¹³
 - The parable does not see the wicked as being annihilated but continuing in a terrible conscious and irreversible condition after death. Although many aspects of the parable do not have a corresponding reality, the reality being taught by the parable would be meaningless unless this were true.¹⁴
- ❖ Christ warned his listeners and the readers of the Gospel of Luke for the fact that the way we live will have eternal consequences. During our lifetime we have the opportunity to repent and to listen to him. Read also Matthew 25:31-46. In this parable Christ mentioned the acts of mercy:
 - “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat,
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,
was a stranger and you invited me in,
I needed clothes and you clothed me,
I was sick and you looked after me,
I was in prison and you came to visit me.”
- ❖ Other passages from the New Testament:
 - “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (Ja 1:27).
 - “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 7:21).
 - “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence” (1 Jn 3:17-19).

¹³ Adeyemo, T. (2006, p. 1263).

¹⁴ Stein, R. H. (1992, p. 424).

- “He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need” (Eph 4:28).
- “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.” (1 Tim 6:17).
- “You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone”(Jas 2:20-24).

Law and the Prophets

- ❖ “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Mi 6:8).
- ❖ “The eternal validity of the OT Scriptures is taught both explicitly and implicitly.”¹⁵

Evangelism

- ❖ “This is a common tactic in evangelism, in a sense frightening people into the kingdom. Undoubtedly, quite a few of us originally became believers in order to escape eternal hellfire. This is completely valid, but the fact is that most unbelievers already know of this doctrine and have chosen either to ignore it or to refuse to believe it.”¹⁶
- ❖ “If one is sincere, all that is necessary for faith is the Scriptures”¹⁷

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¹⁵ Stein, R. H. (1992, p. 427).

¹⁶ Osborne, G. R. (2018, p. 403).

¹⁷ Stein, R. H. (1992, p. 427).

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