

MONEY DECEIVES // Luke 16:19-31*Morning message from the series, The Gospel of Luke*

The parable of “The Rich Man and Lazarus” is unique, not only among the gospels but in the Bible as a whole, as a testimony of hell. While parables are not meant to give literal descriptions—they are, after all, earthly stories with heavenly meanings—this parable is instructive in pointing to the thesis of Luke 16: you cannot serve both God and money. Ultimately, money deceives. The rich man did not have what he thought he had; most importantly, he did not have heaven.

1. Life (v. 19-21) The parable presents a stark contrast between the life of the rich man, who wore expensive “purple and fine linen” and “feasted sumptuously” and the life of the poor man, Lazarus, who “was laid” (that is, likely, dumped) at the rich man’s gate. Lazarus’ condition reflects a rock-bottom check list: he had sores (which the dogs, detested scavengers, licked) and the only way he could eat would be from the crumbs of someone else’s table.

2. Death (v. 22) Both men die, but the poor man experiences a promotion, being carried by angels to Abraham’s side, and the rich man experiences a demotion—he lands in *hades*, the Greek word equivalent to the Old Testament *sheol*. This is the place of the dead, but carries the further implication of torment, a place of pain, as well as anguish, physical suffering. Both of these men crossed the divine threshold, and experienced death, the great equalizer—but their conditions are not merely equalized—they are reversed.

3. Life after death (v. 23-31) The Pharisees knew the Torah, the Old Testament scriptures, but they refused to see that the fulfillment of that scripture was happening right in front of them. Since Jesus began his work, people had repented and become disciples, but the Pharisees didn’t care. They were primarily interested in their own legalism—they couldn’t keep the Law, so they invented rules that they could keep, which only makes a mockery of morality.

a. Mercy (v. 24-26) This passage refutes the claim that people have a second chance at repentance after death, and it also refutes the claim that peoples’ attitudes will change in the afterlife. The rich man still acts as though he has authority, demanding that Lazarus relieve his suffering with a drop of water from his fingertips, a request that will be denied. These men were once neighbors, but now they are eternally separated, as God has purposed.

b. Mission (v. 27-29) The rich man’s next demand is that Abraham send someone to warn his brothers. However, Abraham will point out that the rich man and his family already had the resources they needed to know God. They had the prophets and Moses—in other words, they had the Bible but wanted nothing to do with it. What they actually need is repentance.

c. Miracle (v. 30-31) The rich man now wants a miracle. Will someone rising from the dead convince his family? No. They don’t need this kind of miracle—they need simple faith and repentance. We may think that the people in our area just need to be reminded of the resurrection, that Jesus died and is alive, and they will believe. In reality, we are in a Bible-saturated environment. It is not more Biblical teaching that is needed. Most people already know the gospel—they just need to pick up their Bibles and follow Christ.

The rich man thought money would buy him everything, but in the end, it bought him no thing. Ultimately the parable reinforces the thesis of Luke 16—you cannot serve both God and money. You must allow a higher love of God to replace any lesser loves.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Bible does not teach that it is wrong to have, make, spend, or use money. But it is wrong to love money. How do we know that the rich man loved money more than God? What might tempt us to value money more than we should?
2. The rich man realized (too late) that his family would suffer his same fate. How does his story impact our zeal for engaging our own families with spiritual conversations?
3. If we recognize that our geographic region is saturated with the Bible, that most people have heard the gospel, how does that affect our strategies for engaging with lost neighbors?