

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

LUKE 16:13-31

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Jesus' Continuing Instruction on Kingdom Economics

In our last sermon from Dr. Luke's Gospel Jesus taught about the importance of his disciples being generous and faithful stewards of all that God has given to us in this present age (16:9). He taught us from the *Parable of the Dishonest Steward* that we are to store up riches for ourselves that are incorruptible and kept in heaven, and to make friends for the Kingdom through our generous giving and service to God.

Jesus warned against making Mammon (or money or the "Almighty Dollar") a god in place of serving the true and living God (16:13). In the last sermon, Jesus positively taught how to be generous and faithful as a shrewd steward of God with our money (16:10-13). In our sermon today commonly known as *The Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus* Jesus teaches *negatively* concerning the consequences of living ungenerously with our money; as unfaithful and stingy stewards of all that God has given to us with no thought to those in need who are around us daily.

From our story today, we learn that our generosity and concern for those in need show that we are *truly repentant people* and can be known as true children of Abraham by faith in Christ.

As we learned in our last sermon, American Christians (considered globally) are far richer than most people throughout the world (see statistics from first sermon). The message that we should understand in this passage is particularly needful for us *just because many of us are similar to the rich man* at least in our ability as Americans to wear fine clothing, eat well, and live in nice homes (compared to the rest of the world). *We may not be like the rich man in our attitude of the heart, but that is because we have repented because of God's grace in Christ and we show mercy and compassion to others in need.*

^{ESV} Luke 16:13-18: No servant can serve two masters, for 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 God and money." ¹⁴ The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. ¹⁶ "The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it. ¹⁷ But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void. ¹⁸ "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

Jesus Addresses the Pharisees who love money

I will not go into great detail about verses 14-18, but I will summarize what Jesus says here briefly and what it means in the larger context of our story.

Jesus begins the passage in verses 13-15 for rebuking the Pharisees for loving money more than God, and giving alms *in order to be seen by men* (cf. Matt. 6:1-10). Although the people thought highly of them for their apparent self-sacrifice, God saw their true stingy, unbelieving and unrepentant hearts and it was an *abomination* in his sight (v. 15).

Jesus goes on to rebuke the Pharisees in verses 16-18 for missing the truth of God's teaching found in the Law and the Prophets and how they had sinfully added their own twist or interpretation to the Law of God that had just become the mere words of men (cf. Matthew 15:1ff; Luke 16:18).

Instead of hearing the Old Testament revelation of Moses and the Prophets concerning faithful stewardship and to love God alone, the Pharisees made up commandments not commanded by God to bind the consciences of the people and enslave them in unholy bondage to man's word.

The Law and the Prophets pointed forward to the coming of the Kingdom in Jesus Christ and he is there to fulfill the Law not to abolish it (16:16; Matt. 5:17-20), although there is a new time because of the dawning of the Kingdom in Jesus (John the Baptist being the last of the Old Testament prophets and part of the Old Testament economy, cf. Luke 3-4).

We should be reminded of the larger context from chapter 15:1-2. Jesus was eating with tax collectors and sinners and implicitly the Pharisees are charging him with breaking of ceremonial law for coming close to these kind of people. But Jesus is saying in response now in v. 16 that the good news of the Kingdom of God is being preached and **“everyone”** (not merely Jews) are forcing their way into it. The purposes of God are being more clearly revealed as the **expansive work of grace in Christ can be received by all who will believe.**

Jesus uses the example of how the Pharisees miss the point of God in his law by allowing for divorce as a normal practice rather than understanding that the Law teaches that this is a sin in God's sight (The practice of divorce was a current situation in Pharisaical life where it was considered “normal” for one to get a divorce from his wife for any reason whatsoever).

Rather than understanding that the Law of God revealed God and his righteousness, the Pharisees who loved money rather than God (vv. 13-14) misinterpreted God's Law and perverted the true commands of God that all people are required to keep. Ultimately, the Pharisees great “abomination in the sight of God” (v. 15) was idolatry, love of money and divorce (Notice the use of “abomination” and the particular sins related: Isa. 1:13; 66:3; Deut. 25:16; Deut. 24:4).

In the same way that they misuse their money as stewards of God and they love money rather than God (v. 15) not heeding the Old Testament's teaching on mercy and

compassion to the poor, so they also disregard God's Law that pointed to the Kingdom and the Christ who would come (v. 17). They are pseudo-righteous and their outward acts of faith are a sham.

- a. It "IS" possible to love Mammon more than God
- b. It "IS" impossible to serve two masters (v. 13)
- c. The Pharisees were lovers of money rather than lovers of God (v. 14); the Pharisees are literally "friends of money" (cf. with the right kind of friends according to Jesus in v. 9).
- d. The Pharisees have gone from grumbling (murmuring) about Christ (15:1-2) to now ridiculing him (cf. Psalm 22:7).
- e. This was an abomination in the sight of God (v. 15)
- f. The Law of God witnessed to this reality and that the Kingdom would come and include all those who believe (vv. 16-17)
- g. Example of the Pharisees disregard for the Law of God and an example of their abomination in God's sight (v. 18)

Jesus tells a story so that men may not love money more than God and man

The Rich Man and Lazarus

¹⁹ *"There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰ And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹ who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.*

Jesus sets up two opposite characters in his story to teach about the consequences of living luxuriously in this present age with no regard for one's future and no desire to "win friends" for the Kingdom by being generous and faithful as stewards as he taught in the last parable (see last sermon Luke 16:1-13).

He tells the story of two men: *A rich man greatly wealthy in this life* who ends up in eternal torment; *a poor man who suffered in this life* who repented and ends up in eternal comfort and bliss in God's care as one of Abraham's true sons by faith. The social distance between the two is continued to the end of the story, symbolized first by the gate, then by the 'distance' ('far away,' v. 23) and the 'great chasm' fixed between them (v. 26) (Green, *Luke*, NICNT, pg. 605). We must remember Jesus' words in v. 15 as we proceed to consider his illustrative story:

For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

THE PRESENT LIFE: *The Story of Two Men in this Life*

A Rich Man (Sometimes he has been called '**Dives**' because that is Latin for "rich man") - He is like an ancient Near Eastern "Scrooge"

1. Clothed in purple and fine linen (v. 19a)

The rich man is clothed in purple which was the color of royalty and a very expensive Tyrian purple dye derived from snails or shellfish murex (cf. Proverbs 31:22). He wears expensive linen as his undergarments (expensive underwear was what he wore - -much finer than ‘Calvin Klein’!). His body is covered with wealth and comfort for an ancient Near Eastern man! New Testament commentator Joel Green wrote: “White garments underneath a purple robe – this was the sign of the highest opulence” (NICNT, pg. 605).

2. Feasts sumptuously every day (v. 19b)

The rich man is described as having luxurious taste in *fashion and food!* He lives each day eating feasts of great food- -plenty of expensive wine- - His wine cellar had vintages that all would have envied! He is not only well clothed, but well fed- -*with much left over* (and thrown away implicitly). In the *Parable of the Prodigal Son* (15:11-32) a great feast is prepared on the special occasion that the son returns; here in this story, the man doesn’t merely feast on special occasions *but every single day of his life.*

In a book entitled *Poverty and Charity* by Gladys Hamel, this scholar estimates that for an ancient person in Jesus’ time to have three-fourths pound of meat on the table on a daily basis, one must have the wealth necessary to pay thirty workers for a whole year (pg. 33); this means that this man feasted better than the richest in his day who would only be able to afford to kill a calf occasionally for special occasion- - *This man was lavish!* Truly he would have been featured on the ancient television show *Lifestyles of the Ancient Near Eastern Rich and Famous!*

New Testament Professor Leon Morris commented interestingly: “This man had all he asked in life and lived a life of enjoyable ease. He is not said to have committed any grave sin, but he lived only for himself. This was his condemnation” (*Luke*, pg. 276).

3. Died and was buried and sent to Hades (v. 22b)

The wealth of this man “failed” (16:9) because he died regardless of how wealthy and prosperous he was, he ended up in Hades, the place of the dead.

The message of Jesus here is that there is no mercy in the afterlife for those who fail to show compassion in this life (Quoted in Bock, Vol. II, pg. 1372). As the Apostle John says in his first epistle:

ESV 1 John 3:17-18: But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

The rich man dies and his merriment is over; he is in great anguish, sorrow and torment now. No more nice clothes, no more extravagant parties, no more mansions...*this day his soul has been required of him by God* (cf. Luke 12:20).

A Poor Man – Lazarus

A radical contrast in the way of life with the rich man...

1. Covered with sores (v. 20)

Lazarus, the poor man is NOT covered with purple and linen, but rather with sores. These ulcers are due to disease or perhaps malnutrition. Lazarus is called by name, seeming to indicate God's intimate knowledge of his lot in life and a special knowledge of him as a son of Abraham (Reminding us that God calls some to sorrow and poverty in His sovereignty for His own glory (cf. John 9:1ff; Rom. 11:33-36).

The poor man Lazarus' name means "God helps" (and might cause us to remember Abraham's servant Eleazar (Genesis 15:2; cf. Exodus 6:23); "Lazarus" is the shortened Hebrew name Eleazar (אֵלְעָזָר *El-azar*) like our "Bill" for William or "Bob" for Robert or "Chuck" for Charles ☺). This is the only person in Jesus' stories and parables given a specific name.

2. Hungry and desired to be fed (v. 21a)

In contrast to the rich man, Lazarus does not eat sumptuously, he barely even eats. Like a poor, scraggly and hungry Dickensian child with his nose up against a café window, so Lazarus just desires to fill his hungry tummy. He is also probably crippled because the text tells us that he was *laid* at the high ornamented gate of the rich man (v. 20- This gate teaches us of the great palace-like abode in which the rich man lived). Rabbis actually described Lazarus' life as no life at all! In one Rabbinical writing, the Rabbis said there were three situations that resulted in one not having a life: one who depended on food from another's table, one ruled by his wife, and one whose body was full of sores (*b. Besa* 32b, Quoted in Bock, Vol. II. pg. 1367). I guess the Pharisees would have literally told Lazarus in a humiliating and mocking fashion to "get a life" because of his condition!

Lazarus doesn't necessarily want to be like the rich man- -he doesn't even necessarily desire or demand the man's inviting him to his table- -he would be just fine with the crumbs that fell off the man's table during his sumptuous feast! He desire like we do sometimes when we are really hungry (and no one is looking) when we sop up what remains on our plate with bread, or lick the end of our fingers to glide across our plates to get one more taste of delectable fair.

3. Lived among dogs (v. 21b)

These are not friendly dogs who are described in the story but unclean dogs (according to Jewish Law); stray mutts ("pariahlike mongrels" – Green) that roamed around the streets like vagrants seeking something to eat (Psalm 22:15-16; cf. Phil. 3:2; Rev. 22:15). The picture is not that the dogs come in sentimental fashion to befriend Lazarus, but they come to humiliate and irritate his condition more by licking his sores and possibly infecting them making him ceremonially unclean (The dogs in this culture were not "man's best friend" and would not have had their rabies shots; if you have ever seen a mangy, skinny, filthy, rabid stray dog, you would not want him to come anywhere near you!).

4. Died and was carried to Abraham's side (or bosom) (v. 22)

Like the rich man, Lazarus too died. His suffering is over now! In contrast to the rich man, he does not go to hell to experience torment, but finds a safe and salvation-haven as a true son and heir of the covenant promises in Abraham!

THE AFTERLIFE: *The Story of Two Men in the Life to Come*

This is not a comprehensive theology of the afterlife. We should keep this in mind when reading the story. Jesus says a few things that can be a bit ambiguous and so we shouldn't write a full systematic theology of the intermediate state or what happens after death just from this story.

What we should take with us and understand fully is what Jesus teaches us clearly about this present life and how we live it in light of the afterlife, the intermediate state and the eternal judgment and salvation of God that is revealed in Scripture.

As Professor Geldenhuys warned: "The Savior related this parable not in order to satisfy our curiosity about life after death but to emphasize vividly the tremendous seriousness of life on this side of the grave—on the choice made here by us depends our eternal weal or woe. And however rich and honored a man may outwardly be and however much his life may be filled with worldly pleasure, this will not in eternity be able to effect the slightest change in his condition if he has departed this life without the salvation of God" (Geldenhuys, pg. 427).

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE) written by conservative Bible scholars commented on this parable's teaching on the afterlife: "The parable of the rich man and Lazarus should not be used as a definitive statement about the afterlife, since parables were told to illustrate a point, not to give a systematic account of any doctrine. Thus Jesus intended not to fully describe Hades, but to warn His listeners about their hardheartedness. Also, the text nowhere states that both Lazarus and the rich man were in Hades; Lazarus is clearly placed in 'Abraham's Bosom,' a place 'far off' (v. 23) from Hades and separated from it by 'a great chasm' (v. 26)" (ISBE, *Hades*, Vol. II, pg. 592).

²² The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried,²³ and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

²⁴ And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.'²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.'²⁷ And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house-²⁸ for I have five brothers- so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.'

An Angelic Escort to Abraham's Bosom

We are told that the poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side or bosom (v. 22)

Dr. Luke uses the language of an angelic escort in v. 22: "The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side (or bosom)." We know of two other direct escorts to heaven in the Bible; at the death of Enoch and Elijah we see two men directly escorted into God's heaven (Gen. 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11).

In *The Testament of Job*, a Jewish apocalyptic text, it is written in 47:11: "Rise then, gird yourselves with them before I die in order that you may be able to see those who are coming for my soul, in order that you may marvel over the creatures of God"; in *The Testament of Abraham*, it is written in 20:11-12 about Abraham's death: "And they buried him in the promised land at the oak of Mamre, while the angels escorted his precious soul and ascended into heaven singing the thrice-holy hymn to God, the master of all..." These two texts show that angelic escorts upon death were commonly understood by the Jewish people of Jesus' time (*The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth).

Abraham's side or bosom is figurative for the place where God's comfort and blessing are found for believers by faith. Abraham represented God in heaven or the realization of the covenant promises to the Patriarchs (included in "Abraham's

bosom” was the notion that the other Patriarchs would be there). This is the point that Jesus makes earlier in Luke’s Gospel:

ESV Luke 13:28 In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out.

In the first century Intertestamental Jewish work *4 Maccabees 13:17 (The Apocrypha)* we learn that to be received by Abraham was a common way of thinking about heaven:

RSV 4 Maccabees 13:17 For if we so die, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will welcome us, and all the fathers will praise us."

In the ancient Jewish world, to think of heaven with God was to use the imagery of Father Abraham welcoming the faithful people of God into heaven. This is similar to how we might use imagery of St. Peter at the “Pearly Gates” to describe a scene of welcome into a place we have heard about, cannot fully imagine, but a heavenly place we will one day see.

Being received by Abraham as was Lazarus for his repentance toward and faith in God was what the Bible seems to mean when it says “*being gathered to the fathers*” when saints die such as the Patriarchs and Moses (Gen. 15:15; 47:30; Deut. 31:16; Judges 2:10; 1 Kings 1:21).

They described death as being “gathered to the fathers” (meaning Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob):

ESV Genesis 15:15 As for yourself, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age.

ESV Deuteronomy 31:16 And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers.

We should understand that this way of speaking vaguely about a place called “Abraham’s Bosom” is how the Old Testament saints understood what we call “heaven” before Jesus Christ came to accomplish his perfect work and before His resurrection-ascension to God’s right hand. Now in the New Testament economy (era) Jesus receives His people because He is there in heaven at God’s right hand—ever interceding for His people, awaiting their homecoming, and preparing a place for them (John 14:1ff; Rom. 8:31-39; Rev. 22:1ff).

The important point is that Lazarus is received by God into heaven; once crippled, hungry and suffering with sores - now he is comforted by God himself and the fellowship of other saints in a state of intermediate blessedness (v. 25b: “*Now he is comforted here...*”; this is a glimpse of the greater comfort of God at the Consummation, Rev. 21:1-4).

HADES/SHEOL: *The Underworld or Place of the Dead*

We are told that the rich man when he died went to “Hades” (v. 23).

What and Where is Hades? [ᾍδης -Hades, the world of the dead; death—see also Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; Acts 2:27,31; 1 Cor. 15:55; Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14] in the Bible is the place of the dead (called in Hebrew *Sheol* [שְׁאוֹל, שְׁאוֹל n.f. She`ôl, *the underworld*]). It is the underworld or “intermediate state” where dead souls await the Final Judgment. There is consciousness in this state, and once a person has died, and they have died in an *unrepentant state*, there is no changing of God’s judgment. We hear of this place in the Apostle Peter’s second letter:

ESV 2 Peter 2:9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,

The rich man is in torment now in Hades, the place called *Sheol* in the Old Testament, and the place where the dead were gathered:

ESV Psalm 16:10 For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.

ESV Psalm 86:13 For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

It should be noted that the dead are not only conscious of their fate as we learned earlier, but they can also apparently see each other:

ESV Luke 13:28 In that place [of torment] there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out.

The Prophet Isaiah described Hades or the place of the dead in this way:

ESV Isaiah 66:24 "And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."

It was commonly understood in the teaching of the ancient Jewish writings, that the righteous and the unrighteous were separated after death, and although they can see each other, they cannot cross the unfathomable, uncrossable, unbridgeable chasm that God has fixed in his sovereign judgment (v. 26: “...Between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us”- Father Abraham says).

In the Apocryphal *First Book of Enoch* we can see this ancient Jewish understanding of a separation of the righteous and unrighteous and that there is a final verdict of determining one righteous or unrighteous (sinner) upon one's death based on whether they believed God and repented.

“Then I [Enoch] went to another place...it had in it a deep, wide, and smooth thing which was rolling over...They [the angels] prepared these places in order to put the souls of the people there until the day of their judgment and the appointed time of the great judgment upon them....The sinners are set apart when they die and are buried in great pain, until the great day of judgment...and to those who curse, there will be plague and pain forever...” (1 Enoch 21, The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, ed. Charlesworth).

Jesus is using this common Jewish knowledge effectively to tell his story to lead men to repentance. Jesus is affirming what the people had heard about Hades was true!

Also, we should note the important words of Prof. Jeremias in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the Words of the New Testament* said of the term 'Hades' in light of our passage; Note particularly the discontinuity between dying in the Old Covenant economy (or time period) before Christ and the blessing of dying in the New Covenant after the coming of Christ and his completed work and his resurrection-ascension to God's right hand:

“The difference between Gehenna (translated “Hell”) and “Hades” (the realm of the dead) should be distinct. It is nowhere taught in the New Testament that the faithful at their death first go to the realm of the dead (“Hades”). ***This was indeed the case in Old Testament days before the coming of Christ and His completed work of redemption*** [my emphasis]. When a believer dies [in the New Covenant economy or after the coming of Christ], he is immediately with Christ and in His presence (Acts 7:59; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; cf. Luke 23:43). Spiritually he forthwith receives blessedness. But only at the second coming, when the spirits of the faithful are united with their glorified bodies in resurrection and new earth appears, will full blessedness be the portion of the faithful. Unbelievers, however, go to the realm of the dead (“Hades”) when they die, where (already plunged into affliction) they are to await the final judgment (Rev. 20:13-14)” (*Hades*, Kittel's Theological Word Dictionary).

The *New Dictionary of Theology* (ed. Sinclair Ferguson, David Wright and J. I. Packer) defines ***The Intermediate State*** as: “For unbelievers [the intermediate state] is a state of anguish and torment in Hades (Luke 16:23-25, 28; 2 Peter 2:9) as they await resurrection—and final judgment (John 5:28-29)...For the believer it is a period during which his bodiless soul, in conscious communion with Christ, awaits the receipt of the resurrection body...Although departed believers are no longer active in or conscious of the contemporary earthly world of time and space (cf. Isa. 63:16), they are fully alert to their new environment, for they are not only

‘resting’ from their labors in joyful satisfaction (Heb. 4:10; Rev. 14:13) and safe in God’s hands (Luke 23:46; cf. Acts 7:59), but are (literally) ‘in the presence of Christ’ (Phil. 1:23; cf. 2 Cor. 5:8), ‘live for God’s glory (Luke 20:38) and ‘live spiritually, as God does’ (1 Peter 4:6)” (*Intermediate State*, M. J. Harris, pg. 339).

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* is helpful in understanding the what the Bible teaches as the “Intermediate State” after men die, but before the Great Judgment Seat of Christ:

Westminster Confession of Faith 32.1 The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption:(1) but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them:(2) the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect of holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies.(3) And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day.(4) Beside these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none. (1) Gen. 3:19; Acts 13:36 (2) Luke 23:43; Eccl. 12:7 (3) Heb. 12:23; 2 Cor. 5:1,6,8; Phil. 1:23 with Acts 3:21; Eph. 4:10 (4) Luke 16:23,24; Acts 1:25; Jude 6,7; 1 Pet. 3:19

In these passages, we have the rich man pleading from Hades with “Father Abraham” to have Lazarus come and comfort him now in his place of torment (!! Irony!); Lazarus is the one he knew by name during his life, but didn’t lift a finger to help!).

The Rich Man’s Request of “Father Abraham”

It is interesting to note however that the rich man’s eternal plight has not humbled him! He still has the audacity to call Abraham “father” and he still thinks like a proud wealthy person in asking Abraham to send Lazarus to serve him by dipping his finger in water to cool his arrogant tongue (v. 24)!

He desires Lazarus to show him mercy now even though he never once thought to show mercy to anyone! And even in his concern for his five brothers (v. 28), he is only concerned with his “own people”, and not other “neighbors” (and definitely not his enemies) showing his true colors as still an evil and selfish man even in death! As the Scriptures say:

Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.”¹² “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done. – Revelation 22:11-12

In our story, the rich man believed that because he was ethnically a son of Abraham, he was truly a son of Abraham (cf. Luke 3:8), but as John the Baptist and Jesus clearly taught, one is a son of Abraham by believing like Abraham in God’s promises and showing forth a life of righteousness that bears fruits in keeping with repentance (cf. Luke 3:10ff).

The rich man apparently prided himself with being a son of Abraham (like the Pharisees and scribes, cf. John 8:31-59), *although he was not in reality*. The rich

man thought he was blessed as was common in the ancient world to think that if one was blessed it was because of their righteousness and if someone like Lazarus was poor and beggarly, then it meant that this was because of sin.

We can construct a biblical portrait of the afterlife as we have seen from other scriptures and ancient texts, but there are three points that are eternally important truths of this story for all of us to consider:

(1) **The End is Only the Beginning!** The end of life is not the end of our consciousness as creatures made in God's image- -the end of life is the beginning of our eternal state and once we die, there is no turning back God's verdict with regard to whether we have repented or remained unrepentant and sinful (life "goes on" even for the dead!).

Both men in the story are conscious of their respective fates- - we must repent NOW before it is too late – in fact, Jesus teaches all in Luke 13:1ff that calamity and chaos and destruction and death on this earth are reminders that we will all likewise perish if we do not repent! (Luke 13:3, 5; cf. 2 Peter 3:9).

(2) **The Justice of God in the Reversal of Fortunes:** We should notice the great reversal of fortunes (or providential influence) upon these two men. The rich man while comforted throughout his life, who had learned the Holy Scriptures (vv. 29-31), never repented before God and so now is suffering great pain, torment and agony ("being in torment", v. 23; "have mercy on me", v. 24; "cool my tongue", v. 24; "anguish" "flame", v. 24, 25; "place of torment", v. 28). We learn of this *eschatological reversal* from Jesus' Sermon on the Plain earlier in Luke's Gospel:

*^{ESV} Luke 6:20-24: And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "**Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.**"²¹ "**Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.**" "**Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.**"²² "**Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!**"²³ **Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.**"²⁴ "**But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.**"*

(3) **The Final Verdict is Final:** Once God renders a judgment upon our deaths as to whether we have repented or not, there is no appeal to His judgment; the eternal sentence is final.

^{ESV} Hebrews 9:27 And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment...

Lazarus the poor man who suffered his whole life is now in comfort and under the shadow of the Almighty's wings in Abraham's side or bosom, "comforted here", v. 25). Believers who die after Christ's resurrection-ascension do not go to Hades-Sheol or the realm of the dead, but as the Apostle Paul says: "Absent from the body, present with the Lord!"

Does this story mean that we are to understand that salvation is based upon socio-economic status? Did Jesus teach something other than salvation by grace alone through faith as did the Apostle Paul?

NO! God forbid! What we learn by way of inference is that the rich man although he knew the Holy Scriptures did not obey them (like the Pharisees who were “lovers of money”, v. 13), and so he never repented in light of God’s grace and mercy. In fact, his lack of repentance before God bore fruits of stinginess, lack of mercy and compassion on the less fortunate (the poor), and so he died under God’s judgment because of his unrepentant heart (v. 30- he realizes that he did not repent that is the reason why he is there and implicitly will be the fate of his brothers as well *if they do not repent, too!*).

We learn by way of inference that the poor man Lazarus was a repentant man, who trusted in God’s grace and mercy. He died knowing by faith that God would redeem him from Sheol and bless him with eternal comfort with Him as God had promised for those who lived repentantly.

Before we continue, it is important to understand this eternal contrast as well concerning the “distance” between the rich man and Lazarus not only in this life but in the afterlife: the rich man did not repent and died under God’s judgment; the poor man did repent and received salvation and was heir of the covenant promise made to Abraham and the Patriarchs by faith in God.

Why was there this great eternal distance? One heard and believed God’s Word and one did not; this is what Jesus goes on to teach in the story:

Holy Scripture is Sufficient Knowledge from God

Abraham responds to the rich man’s plea for mercy as a representative of God’s mouth. Abraham in this story is functioning as God’s mouthpiece, as a revelation of God’s Word.

²⁹ But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' ³⁰ And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' ³¹ He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"

Abraham responds to the rich man’s “too late” response by saying that the Holy Scriptures are sufficient to teach about repentance and the only way of salvation so that one can escape eternal torment shut out from the blessed presence of God.

The importance of knowing, understanding, submitting to, and believing Holy Scripture (vv. 29-31)

1. Moses and the Prophets (v. 29-31; cf. Luke 24:24ff)

Abraham responds to the rich man's pitiful plea by telling him that his brothers have the Holy Scriptures: "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them" (v. 29).

What is Father Abraham communicating to the rich man (and all who have yet to repent and believe in Christ)? That Scripture is sufficient to teach all men the truth of the afterlife and cause all men to repent; it is not that God has not clearly revealed himself in creation and the Holy Scriptures, but that *men are sinfully unwilling to believe what they know to be true* (cf. Romans 1:18-32).

In fact, the Apostle Paul tells us clearly that what they do see clearly of the power and attributes of Almighty God they exchange for created things and make idols; for what they know to be true about God, and their need of repentance, they suppress this truth and exchange it for a lie!

ESV Romans 1:19-25: For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Sinful mankind is in a terrible condition in this life that he cannot even acknowledge and worship his Creator as he was created to do! He works extremely hard with his conscience, thinking and accountability *to discount what he sees about God, what he knows to be true about God.*

Father Abraham tells the rich man who is in eternal torment: ***Let them listen to the Bible!*** Why specifically "Moses and the Prophets"? This way of speaking of the two is representative of the entire Old Covenant (it is like saying "Moses, the Prophets and the Writings" to speak of the Old Testament, cf. Luke 24:25-27).

Condemnation because of unrepentant heart not because one is rich!

We should remember that Father Abraham himself was rich, but he believed God and it was credited (imputed) to him as righteousness (cf. Rom. 4). The rich man is not condemned for his richness; rather he is condemned for not believing the Word of God as Father Abraham believed! This is similar to what Jesus said in his controversial conversation with the Jewish leaders in John 8:

[The Jewish leaders said to Jesus}: "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did,"⁴⁰ but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did.⁴¹ You are doing what your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father- even God."⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me."⁴³ Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word."⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me."⁴⁶ Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?⁴⁷ Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad."⁵⁷ So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

There are plenty of specific instructions in the Bible, particularly the Old Testament that the rich man would have access to, that teaches us how to love our neighbor as ourselves, and especially our poor neighbors (see Deut. 14:28-29; 15:1-3, 7-12; 22:1-2; 23:19; 24:7-15; Isaiah 3:14-15; 5:7-8; 32:6-7; Jer. 5:26-28; 7:5-6; Ezek. 18:12-18; Amos 2:6-8; 5:11-12; 8:4-6; Micah 2:1-2; 3:1-3; 6:10-11; Zechariah 7:9-10; Malachi 3:5); just a sampling from "Moses and the Prophets will prove how the Holy Scriptures clearly explained God's heart and expectations of the true children of Abraham:

^{ESV} Deuteronomy 14:28-29: "At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns."²⁹ And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.

^{ESV} Jeremiah 5:26-28: For wicked men are found among my people; they lurk like fowlers lying in wait. They set a trap; they catch men."²⁷ Like a cage full of birds, their houses are full of deceit; therefore they have become great and rich;²⁸ they have grown fat and sleek. They know no bounds in deeds of evil; they judge not with justice the cause of the fatherless, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy.

^{ESV} Amos 2:6-8: Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals-⁷ those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted; a man and his father go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned;⁸ they lay themselves

down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.

ESV Amos 5:11-12: Therefore because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine. ¹² For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins- you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate.

ESV Zechariah 7:9 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, ¹⁰ do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart."

As Jesus said earlier in Dr. Luke's gospel which summarizes the point that Father Abraham is making:

ESV Luke 11:28 But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

Particularly "hearing and keeping" the Word of God with regard to the poor! As the Apostle Paul taught Timothy concerning how he should minister to the rich, he said to him (1 Tim. 6:17-19):

ESV 1 Timothy 6:17-19: As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

New Testament Professor Darrell Bock said clearly: "The two- -Jesus and the ancient Scriptures—are linked. To reject the ancient message is to reject Jesus, and to reject his teaching is to reject the ancient message. If God's Word is believed, a resurrection is not necessary to engender faith; it only bolsters it. If they cannot hear God's voice, they will not see his hands at work."

Application: I think this is important to remember when doing "apologetics" or seeking to defend the Christian faith. The main issue is not trying to prove Christianity is true, particularly the bodily resurrection of Jesus, but it is important to assume from this passage that all men who can hear and understand the Word of God, *know the resurrection to be true.*

It is important for us all to give an account or defend the truth and hope that we have (1 Peter 3:15), but to do so with confidence that God in His sovereignty must witness with and initiate a work of grace in the sinners' heart. Therefore, it is important to tell of the good news of what Christ has

done for sinners, but the emphasis should not merely be on a good intellectual conversation about our faith, rather the emphasis should be upon calling sinners to repentance based on *the truth they already know that is clearly revealed in creation and the Holy Scriptures!*

2. The Resurrection (vv. 30-31)

It is important to note as Jesus taught earlier in Dr. Luke's gospel that empirical evidence of a resurrection is not what men need. They need first by faith respond to the preaching of the Word of God and repent in light of this (Luke 11:16, 29-32). Remember in Luke 11, the people wanted a sign to believe, and Jesus said:

“You want a sign? You want a sign? Your sign is repentance at hearing the Word of God. You must repent, too!”

Although we might think that “evidence of the resurrection demands a verdict” we must understand that sinful man's condition is far worse than we can imagine (see Romans 3:10-23; Ephesians 2:1-3). The condition is so bad that even if one rises from the dead, and they are clearly shown the physical and same glorified body, even perhaps the scars of death upon it, they will deny what they see and exchange the truth of this empirical evidence for a lie.

If they do not believe the Holy Scriptures, neither will they believe (or be convinced) if someone should rise from the dead (v. 31). This is also a preview of things to come in the Book of Luke and the Book of Acts which is Dr. Luke's second volume. Although Jesus does indeed rise bodily from the dead, and repentance is preached in light of this, men fail to believe God's Word (see Peter's Pentecost sermon and all of the Old Testament “Moses and the Prophets” that are included; see the teaching of the Apostles and their prayers in Acts 3-4). In fact, the evidence of Jesus' resurrection merely makes many of the unrepentant sinners to harden their hearts even more and refuse to come to God (cf. Acts 7:48-52; Acts 17:28-32).

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”³² Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.”

God has given all men all the proof they need to repent and believe! But they must repent before it is too late. God will graciously and mercifully receive and restore repentant sinners (Luke 15).

Failure to believe the clear teaching of Moses and the Prophets, and the even clearer teaching in the New Covenant era of Peter, Paul and John is to reveal

one's true heart as well as one's future abode with God in comfort or apart from him in anguish and torment for eternity.

This place of torment that is described is a place of anguish and conscious regret for one's sins and lack of repentance. It is a place where the dead sit and think about all that they knew concerning God and His Christ and how they worked so hard not to believe and to deny it and to busy themselves with other things (such as riches) so as not to have to think of it!

The place of Hades is where those who die outside of Christ, those who are unrepentant and unbelieving, go to wait for the Final Judgment, when Christ shall return and separate the sheep (the righteous believing) from the goats (the unrighteous unbelieving –Matt. 25:41ff). All mankind shall be raised physically from the place of the dead to stand before the Great Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:10ff) to have their eternal verdict affirmed.

ESV Romans 14:10-11: Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; ¹¹ for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."

ESV 2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Those who repented and believed in Christ for salvation shall be receive an eternal verdict from the Great Judge saying: "Well done my good and faithful servant enter into a place of blessed in heaven." While those who did not repent will receive an eternal verdict of misery and suffering that is described in such language as darkness, gloom, a place where the fire never is quenched, the worm does not die, and a place of even greater anguish and torment!

Let us be reminded that like the rich man in our story, Jesus had wealth and riches beyond belief as the Eternal Son!

ESV 2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

Jesus who was rich became poor (like Lazarus) for our sakes to live a perfect life of obedience loving God and neighbor as Moses and the Prophets taught; Jesus bore the curse of the cross for his own, and was resurrected-ascended to God's right hand to rule over heaven and earth; to reign over this present age and the age to come (Eph. 1:21-23).

In Christ's poverty, we have become rich heirs of all that God has promised to Christ (Gal. 3:26-29).

In light of this salvation that has been purchased for us and our expectation of meeting him at the end of our lives, let us live a life of generosity and faithful stewardship. Let us walk by faith and not by sight, taking care of the poor and having compassion on those around us who are in need. Let us hear God's Word and obey it in reliance upon His grace!

Let us show forth visually and concretely our love for God and our true standing before God through our good works and our giving to others. As we read earlier in our Scripture lesson, let us be reminded of what the Apostle John and the Apostle James teach to us:

ESV 1 John 3:17-18: But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

ESV James 2:14-18: What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

We are saved by repenting and turning to God and the grace that he has revealed in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. We repent because of the good news that God has been faithful to His Word in Jesus Christ. The resurrection of the Savior is proof to all the world that the LORD JESUS is indeed Lord and King of Heaven and Earth. Let us bow down to him in repentance and humble submission, proudly and boldly confessing His Name before men.

If you are a repentant Christian, a true child of Abraham, will you continue to listen and hear and obey the Word of God especially in response to Jesus' teaching on giving, generosity, and faithful stewardship? Will you continue to grow in your faith as you are stretched and in reliance upon God's grace become more aware of those in need around you?

If you are an unrepentant sinner, will you continue to reject what you know to be true: all the clear revelation and truth of God's character and power in creation, and especially what you hear in the Holy Scriptures? Or will you repent, avoiding an eternity of torment and anguish because of your unwillingness to believe?

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Scripture Lesson

^{ESV} **Luke 6:20-24:** And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.²¹ "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.²² "Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!²³ Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.²⁴ "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

^{ESV} **Luke 12:15-21:** And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."¹⁶ And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully,¹⁷ and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?'¹⁸ And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.'¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

^{ESV} **James 2:14-18:** What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

^{ESV} **1 John 3:17-18:** But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

I Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19: Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs....¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

Luke 24:25-27; 44-47: And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.... Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.