

Lazarus and the Rich Man

by Ken Campbell

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Text: Luke 16:19-31 King James Version (KJV)

19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

These are certain individuals. This not a parable, it is a specific example.

Many Bible commentaries consider this passage to be a parable. However, I think that Jesus is giving us a specific example of a certain rich man and a certain poor man, named Lazarus. From God's perspective, He sees everything, He knows everything, He has limitless specific examples from which to draw.

Verse 19

(19) There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

Even the color was expensive. Tyrian purple, from the city of Tyre in present day Lebanon, was made from the mucous of the gland of a shell fish or sea snail commonly called a murex and an incredible amount was needed to yield just a tiny amount of dye. Purple was a big deal, very expensive. It was a symbol of wealth and power. There were a number of cities in the Mediterranean known for this expensive industry. Lydia of Thyatira was a seller of purple. She was a servant of God and used a portion of her income to support the missionary efforts of the early church.

Cleopatra, the queen of Egypt showed her extreme wealth by having the sails on her ships dyed with Tyrian purple. Julius Caesar went down to Egypt and caught the purple fashion trend. After visiting Cleopatra with her purple sails and furniture, he came home with a purple toga, which he decreed that only he could wear, a purple monopoly.

However, someone else wore purple. In John 19:1-6 we read, "(1) Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. (2) And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, (3) And

said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands. (4) Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. (5) Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man! (6) When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him."

The rich man lived a life of comfort. He wore a soft fine linen undergarment, a high quality product from Egypt. The Egyptians had already had over two thousand years of experience in the linen business.

And of course, the rich man ate very well. In America, there are a lot of food programs and competitions on television and millions of people are becoming food critics. Growing up, I had never heard of a gastrique, demi-glace, or a beef Wellington. I was familiar with soup beans and corn bread or meatloaf and mashed potatoes. But, it was wonderful and we were satisfied. Most of all, we were thankful. My mother always reminded us of millions of hungry people around the world, who would never experience one of our "every day" meals in their entire lifetime.

God expects us to be thankful. Romans 1:20-21, "(20) For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: (21) Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

One of the first steps downward is to become unthankful to God. There's a spirit of rebellion in the world today to a

greater extent than ever before. The spirit of the antichrist is becoming more and more prevalent in the world. People boldly challenge God saying, "If there is a god, why doesn't he do this or that." They get mad at God, when things don't work out according to their plan or the way they would run the world. On various news blogs, men and women lash out at God with no restraint. People get angry, when they see violent acts committed in the name of religion. And, gradually, as we near the end, all religions of the world are steadily being lumped into one group for burial by the atheists. They think all religion should go. But, one God is alive and His Name is Jesus, the Name that's above every name. I'm thankful for His love and grace and I give Him all the praise!

1 Thessalonians 5:18, "(18) In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." If you want to do the will of God, then give God your praise and worship from your heart. You may not be thankful FOR everything, but we can be thankful IN everything, because God is in control.

Verses 20-21

(20) And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

(21) And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

Lazarus was laid at the rich man's gate. I wonder, who put him there? We don't know. Perhaps it was someone who could have helped him, but thought the rich man had more resources to share. We also do not know if Lazarus ever received any crumbs or left overs from the rich man's table. Man may throw you down at the rich man's gate. Man may throw you out the door onto the street. There are a lot of

people and children being thrown down all over the world and God sees it all. But know this, if you put your trust in Jesus Christ, He will lift you up. He will give you peace and strength that the world can never give. Life may be hard down here, but He will lift you up in the life to come.

I've heard that there is enough food to feed the whole world, but people are starving each day. In America, for example, we are told that perhaps 25% of our food is either wasted or never harvested. What a shame that mankind operates on such a level of greed and incompetence.

The only sympathy that Lazarus received was from the dogs that came by to visit and lick his sores. Some folks say that a licking dog controls bacteria and others say that it spreads bacteria. But, the dogs simply did what they knew to do by instinct. Dogs lick their own wounds. So, they did the same for Lazarus. Even the dogs were doing unto Lazarus as they would have done unto themselves. The rich man could have taken a lesson from the dogs on the street.

Verses 22-23

(22) And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

(23) And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

I once heard a Scottish preacher say, "Until Jesus returns, none of us are getting out of here alive."

The physical body of Lazarus died, but his soul was carried by the angles into Abraham's bosom.

We are not a physical body with a soul. We are a living soul with a physical body.

Genesis 2:7, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

Lazarus probably didn't have any funeral. His body was likely picked up with the morning trash and hauled to the dump. Towns frequently had a large burn pit just outside of town. However, his soul was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. His soul went to join those who had lived a life of faith in God. That's where I want to spend eternity, with Jesus the Savior of my soul and those who love His appearing. Lazarus had no fancy arrangements here on earth. No impressive eulogy was delivered by a local dignitary. No earthly pageantry at all, but he did have angels for pallbearers.

The rich man died. Everyone dies: rich, poor, famous, unknown, everyone. I knew a very successful couple with a lot of money. They had all kinds of nice possessions with everything neatly organized. They had the best doctors and went to the best hospitals. They died. Friend, there are things that money cannot buy; that's why you can't put your trust in it. Proverbs 11:4 says, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath." Money will fail. It always has and it always will.

The rich man probably had a big funeral. In the eastern culture of that day, he may have even had a group of professional mourners. But, while this impressive event was taking place on earth with speeches, eulogies, and ceremonies, the rich man lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torment.

When a lot of people hear this passage, they become offended. How could God do that? Or, they deny it. No, God wouldn't do that. Or, they deny the existence of hell, but Jesus spoke of it. Or, they ignore it and try to put it out of their mind. Why do you think Jesus went to the cross?

Why do you think the Son of God endured agony and punishment for you and I? To save us from nothing?

Jesus said that it is difficult for rich people to go to heaven. Why? Rich people don't go to hell because they have money. They go to hell because they don't have Christ. They're just too self-sufficient, too proud, too arrogant, too self-righteous. I recently read an article about the religious views of many of the financial giants of our day, tech moguls, entertainers, real estate investors, millionaires, and billionaires. Most of them were atheists. Many of them were openly hostile to the message of the gospel. When they spoke of religion, they all had a proud countenance and spoke in a condescending manner.

You can't stand before God with a proud, arrogant, and self-righteous spirit. The Bible says in Proverbs 16:5, "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD..." All kinds of people are proud, but rich or poor, pride is an abomination to God.

Psalms 10:4, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." They have no place for God.

The rich man did not realize that he was missing anything, that he was in desperate need of something. If you don't know that you are sick, you won't seek healing. If you don't know that you are lost, you won't seek salvation. That's why the Ten Commandments are important. That's why God's Word is important. To be saved, you must first understand that you are lost. Without the knowledge of sin and repentance, how can true salvation occur? We are not asking you to join a club or religion to enhance your life or self-esteem. Jesus told Nicodemus, "You MUST be born again." John 3:7

Without Christ, we are all lost. We've all sinned, multiple times, and come short of the glory of God. Everyone has lied, everyone has stolen. Jesus said that if you even entertained the thought of sin, you are guilty of that sin. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" Romans 3:23.

When you sin, you sin against God. The prodigal son ran off and wasted his inheritance, but he told his father in Luke chapter 15, "I have sinned against heaven." David arranged for one of his loyal generals to be killed, so he could steal his wife. But he said, "(3) For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. (4) Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." Psalms 51:3-4

What does humility sound like? Listen to Paul in Romans 7:18-19, "(18) For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. (19) For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." Since Adam fell, mankind has been falling and only Christ can catch us. His hand is mighty to save! We have nothing of ourselves to boast. "(8) For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephesians 2:8-9

If you trust in Christ, you will be saved. If you trust in yourself, you will be lost. Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." You won't be able to take out your platinum card in hell and book a flight to a better destination.

Our salvation was not cheap. It was not something that could be bought with money or traded with material goods.

The only begotten Son of the only true and living God emptied Himself completely. He gave His all to redeem mankind.

Isaiah 53 tells us, "(3) He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (4) Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. (5) But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

John 3:16-19, "(16) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (17) For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (18) He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (19) And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (20) For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

No, the rich man didn't go to hell for being rich. He went to hell for rejecting God, for not believing. He was so caught up in his lifestyle that he had no room for God's love. He loved the darkness rather than the light.

Then, he found himself in hell, in torment, seeing paradise afar off. Hell is not a nice place. It is not a place to hang out with your friends and do what you want. Folks in hell are not going to party and get drunk or stoned. It's hard to imagine,

but there are people who are so lost, that they actually consider hell to be a viable option to be with their friends. No, hell is a horrible place, a place of separation, a place of pain, a place of emotional despair, a place of regret, a place of sorrow, a place of distress, a place of panic, a place of fear, a place of terror, a place that wasn't even created for man. Hell was created for the devil and his angles. Man goes there by choice.

Hear the words of Matthew 25:41, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:"

Hebrew 2:3 asks, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;" We've been given a great salvation, the greatest imaginable, through the sinless, righteous only Son of Almighty God. Salvation is not possible by any other means. No other god or prophet could die on the cross to redeem man from sin, there's no other perfect sacrifice other than Christ, no not one.

In Acts 4:12, we read, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Salvation is only possible in the mighty Name of Jesus!

The rich man of our day smugly says, "This is just a fairy tale from the bronze age." He will even try to give you the date when it happened. Let me give you the correct date when it actually was planned. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:" Ephesians 1:4 But, how are we going to be without blame when we stand before God. How can that be possible? It will be possible only by the grace of God and the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 53:5, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

Hear 1 Peter 1:19-21, "(19) But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: (20) Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, (21) Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God."

Verses 24-26

(24) And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

This rich man who had so much wealth, comfort, and self-confidence is now crying out for even the smallest accommodation. People with everything often appreciate very little. On the other hand, if you are very hungry, even a plain, simple soda cracker will be savored. We find the rich man begging for even a drop of water. While the Spirit of God pleads with your heart, will you say yes to the Christ that promised living water or will you stubbornly continue on to the place of torment, where you will spend eternity crying out for even a drop of water?

(25) But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

No amounts of money or possessions are worth missing heaven. Jesus said in Mark 8:36, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

I think we are going to be surprised by a lot of things we see in Heaven. There are going to be people receiving great honor for giving a small amount, but it was all they had. There are going to be people receiving honor for small deeds that were done with a pure heart. Our trials will be nothing when we see Christ. When we see His dear face, all sorrow will erase.

(26) And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

There won't be any transfers or changes in eternity.

Ecclesiastes 11:3 tells us, "... in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be."

There is no path from hell to Heaven.

The road map to eternity is really very simple.

There is a broad path from earth to hell. It is called the Road of Your Own Way. Just keep doing your own thing, making up your own rules, playing god, setting up your own idols, and ignoring God's love and plan of redemption. It's an easy road to travel and many are going that way. Unfortunately for many, hell could be just around the next bend. Proverbs 16:25, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

But, I have good news; it is THE good news. There IS a path from earth to Heaven and the Name of that path is Jesus! It's time to throw your old map away and let Christ take the lead. I saw a bumper sticker that said, "God is my Copilot." If God is your Copilot, you need to change seats!

Let the Holy Spirit guide you into all truth. John 16:13 says, "He will show you things to come."

Matthew 7:13 & 14 says, "(13) Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

(14) Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

The road of life or the road of death, God says choose you this day. What will you choose?

Verses 27-28

(27) Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

(28) For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

People ask if we will know our loved ones in heaven. The rich man remembered his five brothers and expresses concern for them. Entertainers and famous individuals often laugh about hell and think it is a joke. No one in hell is laughing, no one. If you're lost and you really knew what hell was like, you'd be motivated to change the course of your life. If you're saved and you really knew what hell was like, you too would be motivated to change the course of your life. You'd have more courage to witness to your friends and family. You'd tell everyone about Jesus and you would do it without hesitation.

Verses 29-31

(29) Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

(30) And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

Let them read the Word of God. God has spoken and He is still speaking through His Word. Consider the perspective at the time of Christ. The Old Testament consisted of the Books of Moses or the Pentateuch, the historical books, the poetic books, and the prophetic books. God has revealed himself in His Word. Someone recently said, "I would like to hear God speak to me in an audible voice." Read the Bible out loud. God has not answered every little detail of the universe in the Bible. But, He tells you clearly how to be saved. You can ask Him all your other questions later. There'll be plenty of time in eternity. But, right now, you have urgent business with God, the salvation of your soul.

When Abraham said, "Your brothers have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them," the rich man said, "Nay." No, we're not that kind of people. We don't pay any attention to that old fashioned religion. Moses? Don't you know how old that is? What about all those rules and commandments? Who pays attention to those old books? And those old prophets always had a gloomy message, telling people to repent or judgment is coming. No sir, my brothers don't believe that way. Fire and brimstone, Bible thumping preachers, no man, my brothers are way too enlightened and sophisticated for any of that stuff. We're high class people and it's not good etiquette to talk about religion. It's a private matter. Believe what you like, just keep it to yourself. I have friends and relatives that say some of the same comments in their posts online. It's frightening, but one day the scoffers will finally cease from their slander and every knee will eventually bow. Philippians 2:10-11 Why not bow your knee today, while there is time to be saved?

The rich man had a plan. "But, if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." It's amazing how many people think they could direct things better than God. In fact, people have risen from the dead. There was another Lazarus (the brother of Mary and Martha) that Jesus raised from the

dead, after four days in the tomb. How did people respond? Some came to Christ, but the proud religious leaders of the day wanted to kill Jesus and Lazarus.

John 11:44-48, "(44) And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. (45) Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. (46) But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. (47) Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. (48) If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation."

We will lose our power and position. They considered the miracle of Christ to be a threat to their income. Do you love Jesus or do you love money?

There are people who love God. Great! Then, there are people who love people. We should. But Jesus said in Matthew 10:37, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." God must be first.

There are people who love pleasures and things. Not a good idea. 2 Timothy 3:4 warns that in the last days men would be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Finally, there are people who love money itself. Worst of all. God says, "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." 1 Timothy 6:10

Do you love anything more than Jesus? People talk about

going to heaven and they don't have a clue. They don't know who Jesus is. They don't know what His Word says.

(31) And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Christ rose from the dead, victorious over sin and death. Christ met with more than 500 people before He ascended into Heaven and not one single person could ever be forced to deny the resurrection under threat of torture or death.

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Hebrews 11:6

When it's all said and done, we come to Christ by faith or we don't come. We come to be saved or we are lost.

If the Spirit of God is speaking to you today, then today is your day of salvation. II Corinthians 6:2 says that at just the right time, God heard you. If you cry out to God, He will hear you. On the day of salvation, He will help you. He will send the Holy Spirit to guide you and draw you to him. Certainly, the "right time" is now. Today is the day of salvation! There is no guarantee of tomorrow. Your heart may become hard and your ears deaf to His call. Today, if you are fortunate enough to hear His voice, I urge you to say yes to Christ and His love.

You can experience a spiritual rebirth today. Romans 10:9 says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Will you pray today and begin your journey with Christ? "Lord Jesus, I confess with my mouth today that you are the

only begotten Son of the living God. I repent and turn from my sins. I believe that you died on the cross to save me from my punishment and I receive you as Savior and Lord of my life. Please help me to grow in your fellowship and serve you all the days of my life. I ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.”

If you prayed that prayer today from your heart, then you have become a child of God. You have been born again and your adventure with Christ begins. Read the Bible each day, beginning with the book of John. Talk to God each day and ask for his help. Find a church that loves Jesus, loves people, worships God with enthusiasm, and teaches the Bible. They will help and encourage you on your journey with Christ.

May God bless you,
Ken Campbell

Email: ken@kencampbell.net

For further information, please visit: www.christwillreturn.org

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