

The Rich Man And Lazarus

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 August 2024

Preacher: Stuart King

[0 : 00] So if we just turn back to the passage that we read, chapter 16 of Luke, and we're just going to kind of navigate our way through the passage 19 to 31.

I'm noticing some young people, and don't worry, I'm not going to ask for an answer. I'll maybe do a general one. It was as I was driving over, and Emily, my daughter, you're not allowed to answer because you looked at my phone.

I'm going to quickly read a riddle that I found online, and see if you can tell me what it is. What's the answer to the riddle? You guys are probably far better than me at these things.

So it runs and runs, but can never flee. It is often watched, but never seen. When it's long, it brings boredom.

And when it's short, it brings fear. What is it, or what am I? Anything? Oh, I think somebody's miming it at the back there, children. And you can't answer, Emily.

[0 : 56] Oh, I think somebody's miming it at the back there. Time. Did you say time? I think you did. I think somebody said time at the back there. So it's time. And as we were singing there in Sam 90, I'll just read verse 12 onwards.

And there so is thy wrath. It says, Lord, teach thou us our end and mine to bear. So teach us to keep in mind that we all have an end in our lives.

But here it says, and so to count our days, that we, our hearts, may still apply to learn thy wisdom and thy truth, that we may live thereby. So we're to count our days.

We're to be mindful of the time that we have in our own lives. And I think this passage and this parable that is brought before us is a very stark reminder of how we ought to have our minds on eternity and where our end of life will be.

For some of us, I will not pick, but for some of us, it may feel closer than others. For others, younger ones may feel that they've got all the time in the world. I know as I'm getting older, days just fly by.

[2 : 01] Somehow don't understand how we're in August already. It's nearly Christmas. Apologies. But time just seems to fly by. And I know as a kid, it felt like it was an absolute drag. But we're told here, we're actually instructed to count our days and to be taught by the Lord in how we count our days.

So looking at this passage, the rich man and Lazarus, I'll be honest, I've preached this before, not here, I hope. But I don't know if it was your own minister or if it was possibly Mark in the lever but I said that it's off.

A sermon preached the second time is sometimes like a soup. It's often better reheated. So hopefully, that's the case as we pass our way through this passage again just now.

So if we just look from verse 19, I'll just start navigating our way through that. But just to begin, this may resonate with some people. But one of my favorite movies when I was younger and probably still to this day was the film Gladiator.

Many will have seen it. Many will know that film. But there was a passage. There was a section in that film. There was a quote that said, what we do in life echoes in eternity.

[3 : 08] I think it was originally an actual quote from Marcus Aurelius. But as I was preparing this and reading through these verses, it struck me how appropriate that quote was and how appropriate it is for us to be mindful of eternity and what we do in life will echo in eternity.

And what we see in this parable is an immense reversal of fortunes. And one of the most challenging lessons that we see in this parable is that we have very limited time to decide on two very different approaches to how we live our life.

These two very different approaches culminate in two completely opposing final destinations. And it teaches us that the way we use our privileges and our blessings, our talents, and our gifts is an

indicator of how we expect to experience eternity.

And I don't want to mistake what I said there. I'm not saying that the way we live in this life will determine where we spend eternity. But whether we have accepted salvation that is found in grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone is what will determine whether we spend eternity like the rich man or like Lazarus.

I'm sure there's a couple of parents here. Maybe you let your or spouses. Maybe you let your children or your partner. You share a car. And you've maybe gone into the car, engine goes on. [4 : 32] Bing. They've left the fuel. They've not decided to top up the fuel. Thankfully, my wife is not here because it's regularly me that leaves it. Just as it's tipped into the red and Emily's laugh effed.

I'm just thinking about the fuel gauge. It's an indication of how much petrol is left or diesel is left in the tank. If we run out of petrol, it's because that tank is empty. Not because the gauge is empty.

And it's similar to our own lives. If we neglect to check the gauge of our own lives and the opportunities that the Lord has given us, do we, in the same way, start to run on empty?

And we've got a completely empty tank and we've given nothing over to the Lord. What we do with the blessings that we have, the talents, the gifts, the gift even of time that we give to the Lord and that He is entrusted to us, indicates often whether we've neglected to use the opportunities or not. I can't remember who it was, but I remember a really challenging sermon. I think it was in Glasgow. I think it possibly was Reverend Kenny Stewart that said this in down Vale a number of years ago.

[5 : 36] But he spoke about we have 24 hours in the day. And if we just audit our own lives and we check every now and then, how many minutes or hopefully hours do we actually give to the Lord each and every day?

And I think speaking firstly to myself, I would very much be challenged and probably ashamed with the amount of time that we actually do give over to the Lord. So we need to consider these opportunities that are given to us.

Do we see and take the multiple opportunities that God has given us by maybe helping the neighbor that we know is struggling? It may be similar to the rich man here who clearly knew who Lazarus was.

He was just outside his house. Do we just pass by and ignore them? It's something I want us to consider as we look at this passage this evening. Something else we need to consider as we look at this passage is eternity.

Do you think about eternity? Do you long for eternity? It's something I think we often neglect to do in the life of Christians. But we should always be looking to eternity.

[6 : 38] This is not our home. We are just passing through. We have no continuing city here. And we have to have our greater focus in our lives on eternity. We ought to long for heaven where we will spend time worshiping our Lord.

Our time here on earth is so short. So we need to be continually remembering our eternal destination. And this is a very challenging quote. I've not written it down, but hopefully I don't butcher it.

But I remember Jonathan Edwards, the American theologian. He wrote a series of resolutions. I think he was about 18 or 19 when he wrote these. But one of them was that he resolved never to do anything that he wouldn't do if it was the last hour of his life.

And it's an immense challenge when we find ourselves maybe, I don't know, watching a program or spending time on our phones and social media. If we spend time and we check ourselves and say, if this was my final hour in life, would I be doing what I'm doing just now?

And I think more often than not, the answer would probably be no, and ought to be a little bit of a wake-up call to us. But we don't just see the sight of eternity in this parable.

[7 : 48] Jesus also paints a very vivid picture of what a lost eternity looks like. The world itself, and sadly, some pulpit is across our nation.

You don't often hear the word hell. You don't often hear the prospect of a lost eternity, particularly in the word faith movement, which preaches prosperity, health, and wealth.

You'll never see them speaking of hell, very rarely speaking of sin. But if we are to consider God's word, which we seek to do tonight, we need to look at all of the word, not just the bits that we like to hear.

And there's a serious and stark reminder here from the Lord as he speaks of a lost eternity in this parable. It should grab each and every one of us, and should alert our attention to what he has to

say.

There really are two destinations after this life. There is heaven, and there is hell. There is no in between. There is no opportunity to pass from one to the other. There are two places.

[8 : 46] And for those of us listening here, whether online or in the house today, there are maybe not yet believers. And at the moment en route to a lost eternity, this parable should be the jolt that you need to correct things in your life.

Jesus tells us this parable here today in Carlyway, because he loves us enough to tell us when we are off course. Just think of a doctor. I don't know who your local doctor is. Although I do work in the NHS, I don't know who your local doctor is.

But if you're living an unhealthy life and a doctor, you go and see the doctor, and they tell you of the perils. They tell you of the dangers. If you continue down this path, if you're going for a chocolate bar before you're going for fruit, or whatever it may be, if you're continually being told that you're going down an unhealthy route in life and they tell you how to correct things, you listen to what they say.

And it's the same here. Those of us that are not yet Christian have an opportunity, this very day, to make it right with the Lord. When the physician tells you to correct your lifestyle and gives you remedies to correct your lifestyle, you don't get annoyed at them.

You don't get frustrated with them that they've given you new tablets or they've suggested you go out and walk every now and then to possibly lose some weight. No, you accept their advice. And if you're wise, you heed that advice.

[10 : 03] So why ought you heed the warning of this parable today? What is being said here in these passages that should perk us up and listen to his word?

Well, because once we reach our destination, whatever that destination may be, remember, there's only two of them. There is no turning back. There's no turning back as a rich man found out so starkly here.

And I remember, this is a number of years ago, Reverend Paul Murray, who you'll know well, preaching on this passage. And I remember him saying that when we enter into eternity, we will all be believers, but we will be separated by those who trust the Lord and that know the Lord and those that have realized a truth too late.

Nobody will go into eternity and not believe that the Lord is the Lord, but they will be separated by where their destination is. Today, however, is a very important day for you.

What destination are you journeying towards? What way are you living your life? And how are you using the gifts that the Lord has given you? There's still some time, even this very hour, to respond appropriately to God's word.

[11 : 11] There's time to respond appropriately to his love. Let's take some time to look at how these two men lived their lives and how they lived in life and how they died in death.

There couldn't be a greater contrast between them. One is living in regal splendor with fine clothing, not just any fine clothing, but purple clothing. This was something normally reserved for royalty. He ate sumptuous food every day, not just on the odd special occasion, not just once a year at a birthday, but every day he ate sumptuously. The other man, Lazarus, a poor man covered in sores. His ulcers covered his body, and he would have very much been seen as unclean to those around him. Seems to be starving as even once, nothing more than to crawl under the rich man's table and pick up the scraps that have fallen off.

So he, Lazarus, by all accounts, is homeless at the gates of a no doubt palatial home with only the dogs showing him a drop of compassion.

[12 : 14] Anyone walking by and looking on would think only one of these men had been blessed in their life. Surely it was the rich man, surely he's the one that is abundantly blessed in life.

Many would have envied the rich man's high rolling lifestyle, and it's similar to our own day here. There's a lust, you see, you don't have to go far if you look online or if you open up a newspaper. There's just a lust for fame and a celebrity lifestyle, material possessions, lots of things, lots of money, not much has changed in a couple of thousand years.

The other man, when we look at him, Lazarus, seemed on the face of it to have very little blessings in life, but of course not everything is as it seems. I mentioned earlier that the dogs were licking his sores, but dogs even at this time, they weren't like pets that we see today, many of us here will have dogs.

They're not like that, they weren't beloved man's best friend. No, they were regarded as wild dogs that often rummaged around looking for food, much in the same way sorry as Lazarus does here. [13:22] Yet it was even these animals that showed more affection and compassion for Lazarus than the rich man did. There would have been plenty people walking by, plenty people walking past Lazarus, yet he has zero compassion shown to him.

So what we see here is that our status in life is not an indicator of our status in the next. One of the commentators, Brownlow North says, I'll read this quite slowly, the rich man had everything but God, the beggar had nothing but God, and each was content with their portion.

Lazarus had God and was content, the rich man had no God and was also content. We've looked very briefly at how these men lived, just a brief scan at the lives that they lived, but I want to spend a bit more of our time considering their very important deaths and ultimate eternal destination.

The first thing that we see when we look at these two men in death is that their circumstances completely reverse. The once rich man, which we see in his abundant blessing on earth is now poorer than he could have ever imagined.

He had built his identity, he'd carved that identity out, and his status was puffed up on the fragile and temporary things of this world, all that which will pass away where moth and rust destroy.

[14:48] He wasn't aware of the perilous foundations which he was standing on, was crumbling beneath his feet, yet he thought never to consider the things of God when he was alive.

He only saw himself, again, just as our own world today, wants us to live, just look after yourself, look after number one. You do you, all these quotes that really have no basis and no true meaning to them.

Lazarus, though, who incidentally, incidentally, no here, sorry, is actually named, and obviously we don't hear who the rich man was, but Lazarus himself is named, and I'm happy to be corrected, but I think, maybe I'm wrong, that this is the only parable where Jesus' name is one of the individuals mentioned.

And as I was studying, I was looking at what the name Lazarus meant, I thought, if it's one of the only parables where a name is mentioned, what's the significance of the name? And when we look at the name Lazarus, another form of the Hebrew name, Eleazar, it means whom God helps.

So the name Lazarus itself means whom God helps. So unlike the rich man, Lazarus had built his foundations on solid ground. Might not have looked like that to those that walked by, but he had built his life on solid ground.

[16:04] In life, he could rely on no one else to help him. He depended solely on his Lord. He has literally no one to turn to, but his almighty God.

In contrast though, the rich man again, who remains nameless, spends his entire life focused on self. Just look at verse 25 of the passage. It says, but Abram said, Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus and like mannered bad things, but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.

The passage shows as he received his good things in life, but that was all the good he was to feel, for when he dies, he leaves it all behind, can't take any of it with him. Death snatches away everything this man built his life on.

And it'll be the same for us. And the question maybe to ask ourselves is, what's your number one priority? Where is your number one priority? Is it in your careers? Is it in the money that you have in your bank? Is it in your hobbies?

Is it in your possessions? Is it in your boat? Is it in your home? Where are your priorities? And where do we prioritise things in our lives? And that's a reminder for us that none of it comes with us.

[17:16] It will all rot, it will all rust. Moth and rust will destroy it, it will decay. The wonderful house you maybe just built in recent weeks or months, will one day be demolished in the years ahead after you have gone.

Lazarus here on the other hand, built his life on dependence on God, the only one who helped him. It's a remarkable reversal of fortunes that we read in this passage.

The rich man who in verse 22 received a proper burial goes to hell, a place of misery and torment, both physical and emotional anguish.

Remember though, he doesn't go to hell because he's rich. No, it was because his foundation and prime focus in life was on his wealth and his possessions. It's not a curse to be rich in this life, it's a blessing, but it's what we do with it that determines our eternal destination.

His hope was firmly rooted in that which he could accumulate here on earth, not those treasures he ought to have been laying up in heaven. Now we're not told if Lazarus was buried, but what is made clear is that he was carried away by angels to Abraham's side.

[18:27] What a wonderful picture as we see that, and again, a complete contrast to what we see in the rich man. Lazarus was no longer suffering. He was no longer in pain.

He no longer relied on dogs to soothe his sores. These angels take Lazarus away to the place of unending joy with his Lord, to a glorious banquet, one which he was unable to attend and enjoy in life, but in death he seated at the most glorious of places at that banquet.

Similar to the rich man, Lazarus did not enter into everlasting life because he was poor. No, it was because his hope was firmly secure in Christ and in Christ alone.

For Lazarus, there was now no more pain, no more sores, no more hunger. He is comforted, as we read in verse 25. He has all that he needs from his abundantly merciful God.

Know, however, that we see in verse 24. I'll just quietly read verse 24. This is the rich man, 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.

[19:41] The rich man changes in some ways, but not in others. And one of the study Bibles I was looking at said, immediately after death, both believers and unbelievers have a conscious awareness of their eternal status and enter at once into either suffering or into blessing.

He knew that Lazarus was in a better place than he. He knew that Lazarus was not where he was in torment. Yet he still seems to think that he is above Lazarus in some way, send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger.

He wants Abraham to send Lazarus to comfort him in his agony as if Lazarus is somehow a servant or a worker within his house. But we note an almost chilling and sobering response that Abraham gave him.

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.

Although physically the rich man was a child of Abraham, he was not one of Abraham's true offspring. The window of opportunity to change the destination in eternity for him had closed.

[20:54] The chasm had been fixed. It's fixed. In other words, it is intended by God to allow no crossover at all, and it's made clear to him by Abraham that there will be no crossing over and no reversal of fortunes for the rich man.

The question that was before the rich man in life is the question that's before us today. Do you know the Lord? Have you put your trust in him?

Do you use the wonderful gifts that you have for the Lord in this life? The rich man chose to ignore this question in life, and friends, I would ask you not to be like the rich man.

Don't distance yourself from the rich man either, thinking I'm not, I don't have this palatial home. I think we are far more similar today in 2024 to the rich man than we are Lazarus in our lives.

We hope that I would assume that most of us have got food in our fridges, have warmth, have roofs over our heads, which are far more like the rich man than we may be ought to think.

[21:57] We're very much more aligned to the rich man than to Lazarus today. I'm just gonna read a very quick passage from Matthew 7. You don't need to go there in your Bibles. Matthew 7, 21 to 23 says, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name? And then will I declare to them, I never knew you, depart from me you workers of lawlessness.

How are you using your position and your status today? What are the privileges and the blessings that you have before you? Is it being used for yourself, or do you seek to see God glorified in all that you've been given?

The rich man had every opportunity in life to love God and to love the poor man at his doorstep, who we also know he knows by name. So he knew fine well who Lazarus was.

We see that detail in verse 24. He knows him. It's not that he's oblivious to him and can claim he was ignorant and didn't realize that he was there. He knew fine well who Lazarus was.

[23:10] He knew his name. He knew the plight in his life, yet he ignored him. Who are the names that are maybe running through your own mind that you know of, that we've maybe passed by,

maybe this past week that we've walked beyond and we've not sought to help them?

Now I don't know each of your situations or who the Lord has laid at your doorstep, but we ought to pray for those that we encounter and that we would show our love for that person by showing them who Christ is and by pointing them to the Lord.

Might be even be somebody in your own family. Might not be somebody at a distance. Might be somebody in your congregation, but whoever it is, whether they're hungry, whether they're looking for spiritual encouragement, whatever it may be, we ought to be showing them the love of God and showing it clearly to them.

Pray for them. Use the gifts that the Lord has given to you to help them. Does the money that passes through our own hands get used to glorify God and see him glorified?

Or does it get used for material satisfaction that will one day be left behind, hopefully for someone else, if not it will be destroyed? Would you rather spend one day in the courts of the Lord or a thousand elsewhere?

[24 : 23] We know that from Psalm 84. Where are your priorities? In 2 Corinthians 5 verse 15, it says, And he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

This is the mark of a child of God. He no longer lives for himself, being the center of their own little universe. Those of us that are Christian here today know that we are saved by faith alone.

But of course, the faith that saves us is never alone. The fruits of that should be visible. What are you doing for the Lazarus in your own life today? What we do, as I said earlier, doesn't determine our destiny, but it does indicate what road we may be on.

So the rich man has been told that the chasm between him and Lazarus has been fixed. It cannot be crossed. What next? What about his loved ones? He had more verses 27 to 31.

The rich man here implies that if he only had more information, he would never have ended up in this torment. And many an atheist might say that God didn't give them enough of a reason to believe in him.

[25 : 33] But is that truly the case? You don't have to spend too long on our beautiful islands. I'm not saying between Harris and Lewis. I won't get into that. I want to be able to leave. But we know we just need to go for a short walk in our wonderful island, and we see God's glory around us.

Even in the Greek weather like this, we're still able to see God's wonderful creation and its power, which we see in the weather today, and in its intricacies, how we see the animals, how we see plants even growing.

We can see God no matter where we look for everyone. God's eternal power and his divine nature have been clearly seen each and every day for everyone around.

The rich man tries to argue with Abram that sending Lazarus back would convince his brothers. He's told, however, in no uncertain terms that this will not convince them.

It's a reminder to us that we need to know the gospel and what it tells us about who God is. What's suggested here is that this man, this rich man, seems to have known about Moses and the prophets on some level, whatever that level is, it's suggested here that he knew them on some level.

[26 : 40] But that alone does not save us. Knowledge of the Bible, knowledge of the Bible stories that we know from young age, in and of itself, will not save us. We've got to personally trust in Christ himself.

One of the writers, R.C. Sproul, said, that either we live by faith or else we die in our sins. And that's ultimately the only two alternative that we have.

The rich man, though, is blaming the fact that there was no road to Damascus' moment for him. He doesn't see the failings in how he lived his life. The rich man worshipped his wealth and not God. He ignored his neighbor every day and did not walk humbly with God. Now death reversed his rich status. And when you look at verse 31, I'll just read it there.

This is, 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. And it actually happened. Jesus brought someone from the dead who had been dead for three days, who interestingly was also named Lazarus, again, whom God helps.

[27 : 46] But how did the religious leaders respond to that resurrection of that Lazarus? Did they marvel and say, sorry, sorry for doubting the fact that they were dead? Sorry for doubting you, Jesus, we now know exactly who you are.

No, they set out to kill him. So seeing the life and death of these two men, where do we go from here? What do we do with this parable that is before us? Well, we ought to turn to the cross and to Christ himself.

He was the only one who showed love, mercy and walked perfectly humbly with his God in life.

None of us can attest or claim to have lived a perfect life, yet he did.

And being the only one qualified to do so, he went to the cross as our substitution, perfect without blemish to take away the sins of the world. So God had made a way for those who seek forgiveness.

But there is no way of salvation for those who don't. So we see the rich man here, he is in hell, not because he's rich, but because he chose to build his life around something other than the Lord.

[28 : 50] Lazarus, however, is in heaven, again, not because he was poor, but because he looked to God in his life, healing heavily upon the Lord in his life. So to those that are not yet Christian, here or online, I urge you to come to the Lord, to repent of the sins in your life, consider where your eternal destination may be.

And I urge you to think about this parable and what it means in your own life. The word of God here is alive and able to change us from within.

So let Scripture lead you to Christ and what he did with his perfect life, death and resurrection.

Excuse me. Like Lazarus, lean heavily upon Christ this evening and always.

And it's my prayer that you would not be like the rich man, that you would today come to the Lord in your sin, knowing that without his offer of salvation you would be rightly condemned at the day of judgment.

And I'll leave you this evening with, again, something from Brownlow North, who wrote a fantastic book this time on this parable itself. And it's quite a long one, so I'll take my time to read this final quote.

[30 : 07] Brownlow North says, Oh, what eager longing, earnest, heartfelt prayers are the prayers that are offered up in hell. With what strong crying and tears and in what soul agony are they uttered?

How truly do the lips that pour them forth feel their need? And how anxious are they to get their prayers answered? Answered they can never be, however.

The prayers and the sense of need are both alike, unavailing. They are too late. Don't leave it too late. Today is the day of salvation.

Don't let another sun go down without making your calling an election sure. As we leave this building here today, or as we turn off the live stream, we will be making a choice between how we want to live in these two destinations.

So I urge you not to leave it too late and to turn to the Lord, seeking His face and seeking to enjoy a wonderful relationship with Him, as we saw Lazarus having, where he ended up having an eternity.

[31 : 13] Even this day to day, he is in the presence of his Lord, which we look, I mentioned in prayer, the first Catechism. He is glorifying and enjoying God forever.

And he's there and he will be into eternity. So don't leave it too late. And I would urge you to come to the Lord this evening. Amen.