

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS



Passages to Study: Luke 16:13-15, 19-31.

Read with the class: Luke 16:19-31.

Texts for memorization:

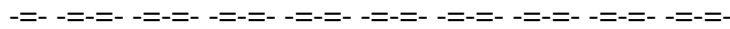
Younger: Prov. 10:7 “The name .. shall rot”.

Older Proverbs 29:1.



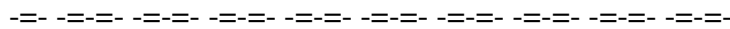
OBJECTIVES: To teach that:

1. There really is a hell.
2. Each one decides his/her eternal destiny in this life.
3. After death, one’s destiny can not be changed.
4. It is better to beg for bread in this life than to ask for water in the next.



Introduction: On many occasions, we exercise the privilege of “changing our mind”. In fact, that is essential in the act of repentance. However, there are changes of mind that are not possible, once the day of opportunity is past, and such is the one described in this story. For this reason it is most important to make good decisions. The Pharisees had mocked the Lord Jesus for the teaching He gave in the parable of the unjust steward, (Lu. 16:13-15). In this way, they gave their tacit approval to the unjust steward who attempted to please his master, the creditor, on the one hand, and also the debtors. (Lu.16:13-15) This flawed value system justified them in their behaviour for they were insensitive to what was righteous before God. They are warned in this story of the dire consequences of their behaviour. The parable of the unjust steward is exemplified in the true story of the rich man and Lazarus.

(See commentary on the linkage between the two parts of Luke 16 which is a Supplement available to those who request it).



SCENE No. 1. VISUAL AIDS: In a luxurious house, a figure of the rich man enjoying a good meal, attended by servants and surrounded by comforts. Outside the door, the figure of Lazarus and some stray dogs. Somewhere near, the figure of the cold hand of death.

DEVELOPMENT:

- Constantly critical of the Lord Jesus, the Pharisees mocked Him and the eternal values that He taught.
- They believed it was possible to serve God and riches, as the unjust steward had done.
- In this story, the Lord speaks about two lives, two deaths and two eternal destinies.
- The Lord shows that when a person lives his life occupied only with material things, he loses sight of what is more important, his eternal destiny.
- The rich man took pleasure in his material things, insensitive to the needs of another.
- Knowledge of God would have moved him to live as God wanted, and to be concerned about things that have eternal value, such as caring for the needs of others. The Golden Rule of loving God with all your being and your neighbour as yourself continues to be the standard by which man is judged. See Luke 10:27.
- The rich man has close by someone to whom he can show kindness, since a hungry beggar is laid uncaringly at his door.

Cns. In the criticism launched against Jesus at the beginning of Luke 15, the scribes and Pharisees say that He received sinners and ate with them. The rich man shows the opposite attitude, total lack of concern for the beggar at his door.

- It is not because of his riches that the man does not please God, but because his life shows that the love of God has no place in his heart.

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- Lazarus would be happy to satisfy his hunger with the bits that were left over from the rich man’s meals, but no one gave them to him.
- For his malnourished body full of sores, he only “medical” help comes from the dogs of the street.
- Such is Lazarus’ weakness, that he can not defend himself from them.

Cmt. The dogs are seen to show more concern than the rich man.

Cns. Favourable conditions in the life of people can make them insensitive to the needs of others. See James 1:27 where the lonely and bereft are to be taken into account.

Cmt. The concept of sin in the minds of youth and society in general is usually related to gross immorality, terrorist acts, and violation of human rights. Being unkind to others, and insensitive to their needs is seldom categorized as sin. See Philippians 2:4 where the Lord Jesus is shown as the perfect example of one “looking on the needs of others”.

Sug. Help the students to see that wrong attitudes, insensitivity to the needs of others, and being ungodly is sin.

- It is not his sufferings that prepare Lazarus to meet his God.
- His name, which means “God is my helper” shows where his faith has been placed.
- He does not put his faith in the hope that his poverty and sufferings will allow him to merit salvation.
- Death comes to Lazarus first, and then to the rich man.

Apl. Everybody will come to this point, and that is why it is so important that preparations for death be made during this life.

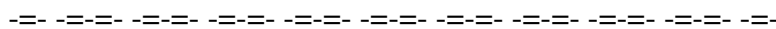
- Nothing is said about Lazarus’ burial.
- The Lord reveals that angels come to lovingly transport the man to paradise, a radical change for one who had been dropped, helpless, at the rich man’s.
- The place where he goes was called by the Jews “Abraham’s bosom”, a place of happiness.

Cns. Did the rich man notice Lazarus’ absence? Would he have enquired about him? Would the death of the beggar have given the rich man a moment’s thought?

Sug. Using questions such as these, ask the children if they have someone related to them or known to them who has died, and what effect did it have on them?

- The rich man dies also and is buried, coming to himself **IN HELL**. Nothing is said about his funeral, nor about the opulence of his coffin and tomb. Only his final destiny matters.

Cmt. This story confirms that there are only **TWO DESTINIES** that one can reach. Had the rich man thought about waking up in Hell?



SCENE No. 2 VISUAL AIDS: Divide the flannel board into two, with a black background on one side and the rich man among flames, and on the other side, Lazarus, Abraham and some angels. A sign can list the faculties one retains in Eternity, that of **SIGHT, HEARING, SPEECH, FEELING** and **MEMORY**.

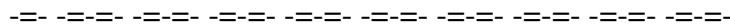
DEVELOPMENT:

- The truly important difference between these two men is seen on their arrival at their eternal destination.
- Lazarus enjoys a happiness unknown to him throughout his earthly life.
- The rich man finds himself in torment, with a thirst previously unknown to him.
- Since he is a “son” of Abraham, he believes that his forefather can send him water with Lazarus, a person he had previously despised.
- He who before had been careless of the privilege that was his of being a son of Abraham now wants to take advantage of this fact calling upon Abraham as “Father”. (v.24)

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- Apl.** The privilege one has of being a child of Christian parents is most valuable, but is no guarantee of salvation unless one believes in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The rich man discovers that decisions taken in life remain permanently in place after death.
- Although there is a time after death when we are absent from the body, we retain the faculties of sight, hearing, speech, feelings and memory.
- They have no possibility of changing their destiny or relieving their sufferings after death.
- Cns.** The Word of God never tells us to pray for the dead.
- The great gulf fixed does not allow anyone to pass from one place to the other.
- Cmt.** The gulf was something large and deep, impassable.
- When the rich man realized that there was no relief for his suffering, he changed his request.
- He wants his brothers to see Lazarus resurrected and thus receive a warning so that they will change their unconcerned way of life.
- Cns.** It is remarkable that the rich man acknowledges Lazarus' privileged status and requests that he go with the message, indicating his own feeling of unworthiness.
- Abraham tells the rich man that his relatives **ALREADY** have a witness from God, the writings of Moses, and that they ought to pay attention to these.
- The Scriptures are shown to be the fountain of truth which it is necessary to take into account in order to be sure one's eternal destiny is full of happiness.
- When the rich man insists, Abraham responds that if they do not believe Moses, neither will they be convinced by a miracle of resurrection.
- Cmt.** This was shown to be true when the leaders of the Jews would not believe the Lord Jesus had been raised from the dead, and tried to cover up with a lie every proof of the His resurrection.
- God gives warnings to His creatures through His Word, and whoever is not convinced by this will not be convinced by any other means either.



SCENE No. 3. APPLICATION. VISUAL AIDS: Figures of the Two Roads, with people walking along the pathway of life towards a pillar marked "death". Figures representing the two destinies, heaven and hell, revealing the destiny of each choice.

In writing, the verse: "**NOW** is the day of salvation". 2 Cor. 6:2, (on the left side of the pillar).

On the other side, the question, "**WERE WILL YOU BE IN ETERNITY?**"

DEVELOPMENT:

- Each person born into this world accepts or rejects the Saviour during his/her lifetime.
- God's Word warns those that live in this world that "**NOW** is the day of salvation". It does not even say "**TODAY**", but **NOW**.
- Our faith in the Word of God or our unbelief of the Word decides where we will be in Eternity. (John 5:24; 3:36)
- Death is no respecter of person and does not make a difference between rich and poor. No one is favoured over the other, but rather the life of each person ends at a point decided by God.
- Lazarus' name was written in the book of life.
- We do not know the rich man's name, something explained in Proverbs 10:7, "the name of the wicked shall rot".
- This true story is given as a warning to each one and verses 23, 24, 25 and 28 remind us that the unsaved will suffer torment.
- Also, the great gulf fixed between the two destinations show how irrevocable is the final decision of those who choose to remain without Christ.

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VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY

Note: In order to see the connection between the parable in the first part of Luke 16, and the story with which it ends, the following notes might be of assistance.



Luke 16:13-14 has to do with the previous teaching on the unfaithful steward, who supposedly tried to please his boss, and at the same time, favour the debtors in order to secure his future. He was disloyal to his master and dishonest with the debtors. Hence verse 13, No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (riches)

Strong Concordance Reference: 3126. Used four times in the N.T.

Of Aramaic origin (confidence, i.e. wealth, personified);

1) mammon 2) treasure 3) riches (where it is personified and opposed to God) Luke 16:13.

Verse 14 is Luke’s report on how the Pharisees received the parable, mocking the Lord Jesus for the story he told.

14 “And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided (or, mocked) him.”

Since they were “covetous”, whatever is done to keep what you have is justifiable in their thinking. To win and not lose seems to be their maxim. It is an example of applying the idea that the end justifies the means. The Lord spoke directly to their mockery and their flawed value system.

Verse 15 The key is found in the contrast of God’s evaluation versus man’s.

15 “And he said to them, Ye are they who justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.”

The connection with this comment by the Lord Jesus and what follows in the story about the rich man and Lazarus is not exceptionally clear and requires explanation.

Verse 16 “The law and the prophets [were] until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.”

Verse 17 “And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than one tittle of the law to fail.” The Pharisees had taken it upon themselves to make adjustments in the application of the Law. As “guardians” of the law and the recognized teachers of it, they had changed it’s demands (as applied to the people), to suit their own ends. They claimed to uphold God’s requirements while at the same time giving in to the pressures of the people to have certain demands relaxed. The Lord affirms in verse 17 that the law in all it’s parts would remain unassailable and unchanged by men.

The unfaithful servant had taken it upon himself to lessen the load of debt borne by the people, all with the object of getting some sort of “protection” from the people when things would go ill with him. It was his method of trying to secure his future.

Verse 18 And that is why verse 18 is used as an example.

18 “Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from [her] husband committeth adultery.”

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It seems like a strange comment out of synch with what went before and what follows, for marriage and divorce weren't even in the picture. However, it was an example of one area where the law's demands were being relaxed. They were allowing a man to divorce his wife for **ANY** reason, instead of applying the law in all of it's rigor.

And then comes the story of the rich man and Lazarus. There is a hint in the narrative suggesting that the rich man during his lifetime had failed to live up to the requirement of the law which said "love your neighbour". The rich man had failed by being insensitive to the need of the poor man on his doorstep. His extravagant life-style probably included people whose friendship he was cultivating to obtain favours later on. The practice is seen in different levels of society today. However, when he died, what he had envisioned was missing and instead of finding himself received into the habitation of those with whom he had made an alliance, he found himself in hell, unable to escape, unable to change his chosen doom. He could not reverse his disastrous choice.

He had not been alone in this idea, for he had brothers who had followed the same pathway. If they continued in their lifestyle, they would find themselves with him. What was highly regarded by him and others in having ignored certain parts of the law was indeed an abomination before God and the rich man in hell was a living example of it's consequences. Some people call this method "networking", that is, cultivating relationship to attain certain ends.

Verse 19 And then the story starts.

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

Luke 15 and 16 form one section. The connection is seen in **Luke 16:1 "And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods."**

Luke 16 can be best understood in the light of **Luke 15** where we read of the attitude which the Pharisees and the scribes had adopted towards publicans and the sinners. The law required them to be kind to their neighbours, but they had despised them. The Pharisees and scribes had tried to serve two masters. On the one hand was the God of the law, and on the other, the demands of sinful people. In the end, the God of the law cannot receive them for they have despised His holiness, and the "friends" they had favoured will not be able to do anything for them. The rich man is unable to receive help from his friends in his state of suffering. Not even Lazarus is free to return to warn his brothers. The man is totally lost and unable to change what had been his choice in life.

The ninety-nine sheep in the fold were types of the Pharisees and the scribes. They considered themselves righteous and didn't sense being "lost". The nine coins still linked together weren't classified as being "lost", and the elder son certainly considered himself superior to his younger brother. After all, he had never done the things his younger brother had. His refusal to receive his brother and enter into the house to eat with him shows his insensitivity not only to his brother but also to the father's heart of joy. The father's joy was due to a lost son being found, and a dead son now alive.

The unfaithful steward in the parable and the rich man who goes to hell also portray the Pharisees and the scribes in their true spiritual state before God. They rejected the teaching of the Lord Jesus for it was clearly aimed at portraying them in their true light.