



FAITH AND GRACE CHURCH

LEARNING FROM THE MASTER (JESUS CHRIST- OUR CHIEF CORNERSTONE)

STUDY 21-58 – THE PARABLES OF JESUS - Parable No. 33- The rich man and Lazarus

TEXT: Luke 16:19-31

LAST WEEK: Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-13)

LESSONS: - Believers should be shrewd enough, and have enough foresight to plan for the real future. Jesus is encouraging His followers to be generous with their wealth in this life so that in the life to come their new friends will receive them "into eternal dwellings." we are to be generous with our wealth and use it for the benefit of others.

The rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)

INTRODUCTION

Luke 16:19-31 contains the story of the rich man and Lazarus.

There are some questions as to whether this story is a true, real-life account or a parable, since two of its characters are named (making it unique among parables). Parable or not, however, there is much we can learn from this passage:

Heaven and hell are both real

First, Jesus teaches here that heaven and hell are both real, literal places. We must not shy away from teachings on hell. Christ spoke about hell a great deal, as did Paul, Peter, John, Jude, and the writer of Hebrews. The Bible is clear that every person who has ever lived will spend eternity in either heaven or hell. Like the rich man in the story, multitudes today are complacent in their conviction that all is well with their soul, and many will hear our Savior tell them otherwise when they die (Matthew 7:23).

No repentance after death

This story also illustrates that once we cross the eternal horizon, there are no more chances. The transition to our eternal state takes place the moment we die (2 Corinthians 5:8; Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23). When believers die, they are immediately in the conscious fellowship and joys of heaven. When unbelievers die, they are just as immediately in the conscious pain, suffering, and torment of hell. Notice the rich man did not ask for his brothers to pray for his release from some purgatorial middle ground, thereby expediting his journey to heaven. He knew he was in hell, and he knew why. That is why his requests were merely to be comforted and to have a warning sent to his brothers. He knew there was no escape. He was eternally separated from God, and Abraham made it clear to him that there was no hope of ever mitigating his pain, suffering, or sorrow. Those in hell will perfectly recollect missed opportunities and their rejection of the gospel.

The riches and poor – the right perspective

Like many these days who buy into the “prosperity gospel,” the rich man wrongly saw his material riches as evidence of God’s love and blessing. Likewise, he believed the poor and destitute, like Lazarus, were cursed by God. Yet, as the apostle James exhorted in James 5:5 not only do riches not get one into heaven, but they have the power to separate a person from God in a way that few other things can. Riches are deceitful (Mark 4:19). It is certainly not impossible for the very rich to enter heaven (many heroes of the Bible were wealthy), but Scripture is clear that it is very hard (Matthew 19:23-24; Mark 10:23-25; Luke 18:24-25).

Treat the poor well

True followers of Christ will not be indifferent to the plight of the poor like the rich man in this story was. God loves the poor and is offended when His children neglect them (Proverbs 17:5; 22:9, 22-23; 29:7; 31:8-9). In fact, those who show mercy to the poor are in effect ministering to Christ personally (Matthew 25:35-40). Christians are known by the fruit they bear. The Holy Spirit’s residence in our hearts will most certainly impact how we live and what we do.

Know the Scriptures

Abraham’s words in verses 29 and 31 referring to “Moses and the Prophets” (Scripture) confirms that understanding the revealed Word of God has the power to turn unbelief into faith (Hebrew 4:12; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23). Furthermore, knowing Scripture helps us to understand that God’s children, like Lazarus, can suffer while on this earth—suffering is one of the many tragic consequences of living in a sinful and fallen world.

Life is short.

The Bible says our earthly lives are a “mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes” (James 4:14). Our earthly sojourn is exceedingly brief. Perhaps the greatest lesson to learn from this story, then, is that when death comes knocking on our door there is only one thing that matters: our relationship with Jesus Christ. “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?” (Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36). Eternal life is only found in Christ. “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:11-12). The truth is, if we wish to live apart from God during our time on earth, He will grant us our wish for eternity as well. As one pastor aptly said, “If you board the train of unbelief, you will have to take it all the way to its destination.”