

**STORY**

The Rich Man and Poor Lazarus (The Poor Rich Man and Lazarus) - Luke 16:19-31

**TEACHER PRAYER**

Dear Lord Jesus, You want me to recognize at all times the power and the effectiveness of Your Word, the very hand that sustains me. You want me to know that it is only through Your Word that anything good on earth can be accomplished; only through Your Word that any man can be brought to saving faith. Through the power of Your Word, enable me to teach these truths to my students, that they too may develop a deep and sincere reverence for Your precious, saving Truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

**VOCABULARY**

*Fared sumptuously* – a life full of luxuries and earthly riches.

*Bosom* – the front part of the chest, where something very dear is cradled or held.

*Hades* – literally "the underworld" or "the place of the dead," here used as another name for Hell.

**OUTER AIM**

Jesus tells us a parable about true riches.

**INNER AIM**

Jesus teaches us about the power of His Word, which alone can convert and save sinners.

**BACKGROUND**

The Gospel of Luke, especially chapters 10-20, is rich in parables. A parable is a story from which we are to learn one central thought or truth. Though the central truth of this particular parable certainly applies to all of us, it was originally directed at the Pharisees "who were lovers of money..." (Luke 16:14) Earthly wealth neither saves nor condemns. It is not an indication of how God feels about the individual sinner. God looks at the heart, and the only thing that can change the heart is the Word of God. This is the central message of this parable: "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead." (Luke 16:21)

## v. 19-21

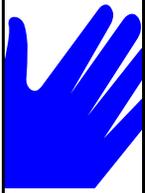
- ▶ Jesus' description of the characters in the parable.
- ▶ To the Pharisees, earthly wealth and prosperity were indications of God's approval.
- ▶ Hard times and physical afflictions were proof of God's disapproval.
- ▶ Even Jesus' own disciples believed this for a time (John 9:1-2).
- ▶ Jesus looks at the inside: "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts.
- ▶ For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16:15 – which immediately precedes this parable.)

## v. 22

- ▶ In the parable Lazarus died and went to Heaven.
- ▶ The rich man died and went to hell.
- ▶ Note that poverty on earth did not save Lazarus, nor did wealth damn the rich man.
- ▶ Lazarus was saved by faith; the rich man was condemned because of his unbelief.

## v. 23-24

- ▶ Hell is a real place, with real pain lasting an eternity.
- ▶ It is neither a myth nor a mere symbol for nonexistence.
- ▶ Note the utter misery of hell if even a drop of water on his tongue would give the sufferer comfort.



- ▶ The picture of Lazarus resting in Abraham's bosom draws a sharp contrast with the agony of the unbeliever in hell.
- ▶ Note also that even in hell this unbeliever still views Lazarus as his slave.

#### v. 25-26

- ▶ There is simple irony in these words, not cause and effect.
- ▶ The one who suffered on earth now receives comfort; the one who enjoyed all of the comforts is now tormented.
- ▶ Note that Abraham here only points to this irony. He does not make it the cause of a man's state in eternity.
- ▶ Since we are to glean only one central truth from a parable, we are not to create doctrine from other aspects of the story.
- ▶ Therefore we are not to imagine that the souls in hell will forever be bothering the saints in heaven, or that there is a physical gulf fixed between heaven and hell that we can see across.

#### v. 27-31

- ▶ Convinced that he can gain nothing from Lazarus for himself, the thoughts of the selfish man now turn to his five brothers.
- ▶ He believes that if Lazarus would rise from the dead his brothers would believe. (The implication is that God could have done more to save him.)
- ▶ The man's request seems reasonable to our human minds, but not when we consider that faith is not a rational decision made by the mind of man, but a working in the heart by the Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace – the gospel, in word and sacrament.
- ▶ This truth was proved beyond any doubt when Jesus himself rose from the dead, and still the Jews refused to believe in him.
- ▶ Here in v. 31 is the key to this parable.
- ▶ The Word of God is the only power that can bring a man to faith. "Moses and the prophets" refers to the Old Testament, which was the only part of the Bible available in Jesus' day.

### **STUDENT PRAYER**

Dear Father in heaven, we can never thank You enough for giving us Your Word, the Bible. From this parable of the Rich Man and Poor Lazarus, told to us by Your Son, we know that Your Word is the only power that can create saving faith in our hearts, and without faith we can't be saved. Help us to treasure Your Word all our lives, since Your Word has not only brought us to faith, it also is the hand that guards this faith in our hearts. Help us also to share Your Word with others, so that they may come to know You as their Savior. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

### **PRESENTATION**

The story appears only in Luke, and is short enough that it can be read in its entirety by the teacher or by the Middle and Upper students. As always, telling the story in your own words can help the concentration and retention of the student.

### **APPLICATIONS**

1. When things go wrong or we have problems in our lives, it is tempting to try to blame someone else. "Yes, I stole some of the apples from Mr. Johnson's tree – but he should have put a fence around his yard if he didn't want me to take them." The Rich Man wanted to make it God's fault that he went to Hell. It was the man's rejection of God's Word, not his wealth, which condemned him. Jesus tells us the only thing that can turn an unbeliever into a believer is the Word of God. How thankful we ought to be that we have that Word of God and can read it every day!

2. It is a good thing that we don't have to rely on signs today before we will believe. Magicians today can create illusions that are truly baffling – making people, animals, even huge objects like airplanes just "disappear." We know that these are only tricks, but what if we had to rely on our eyes before we would believe something. What would we believe?
3. Why is it so foolish to live for the things of this world? How long do they last when compared with eternity? That is why we believe that the most important and most precious thing on earth is the Word of God. We ought to treasure it.

## **PASSAGES**

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

### Lower

Psalms 119:105 - Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Luke 16:15a - God knows your hearts.

John 10:35 - The Scripture cannot be broken.

### Middle any of the above and...

Luke 4:4 - But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'"

Luke 16:15b - For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

Isaiah 55:11 - So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

### Upper any of the above and...

2 Timothy 3:15 - From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 3:16 - All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

Hebrews 4:12 - For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

## **HYMN CHOICES**

"Lord, Open Thou My Heart To Hear" (TLH #5:1-2)

"Preserve Thy Word, O Savior" (TLH #264:1,5)

"O Lord Look Down From Heaven Behold" (TLH #260:1, 4-5)

"O Jesus King of Glory" (TLH #130:3, 5-6)