

Are You Lazarus or the Rich Man?

Luke 16:18-31

Pastor Jason Van Bommel, Forest Hill Presbyterian

"But Abraham said, '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.'"

- Luke 16:25, ESV

Despite what you may see on television or in the movies, God tells us the world contains only two kinds of people. Neither the message of infinite diversity nor the message of essential sameness is accurate. God has created a variety of people, indeed, and yet we are all made in His image. So, we are diverse and yet we are all human, but this misses the most important point: God says the whole world has two kinds of people: those who belong to Him and those who are in rebellion against Him.

The Bible repeats this message to us over and over again:

- Some are on the broad road that leads to destruction, while others are on the narrow road that leads to life. ([Matthew 7:13-14](#))
- Some are sheep and some are goats. ([Matthew 25:31-46](#))
- Some follow the voice of Lady Wisdom while others follow the Woman Folly. ([Proverbs 9](#))
- Some are righteous while others are wicked. ([Psalm 1 & Psalm 112](#))
- Some are in the kingdom of God's Son, while others are in the kingdom of darkness. ([Colossians 1:13-14](#))

In today's passage, the two kinds of people in the world are represented in Jesus' story by the characters of the rich man and Lazarus:

The rich man seems abundantly blessed in this life. He has all of the world's material goods and advantages. He has not just money but a large family and lots of friends, as evidenced by the rich feasts he hosts at his home.

Lazarus seems absolutely cursed in this life. He is unemployed, homeless and destitute. He seems to have no family and no friends, no one to care for him except the dogs (a vile, unclean animal in Israel), who lick his sores as he begs outside of the rich man's gate. While we're told that Lazarus desired to be fed from the scraps that fell from the rich man's table, we don't know that he ever received such relief from his hunger.

For those who hold to some form of prosperity gospel, this parable is a strong rebuke. For all of us who are tempted to use our external circumstances as a measure of how pleased God is with our lives, this parable is a strong rebuke.

While the rich man and his relatives have many material blessings, Jesus presents them as having two core problems: They are hardened to the word of God, and they are indifferent to the needs of others. The rich man and his family are not without religion, for Abraham indicates that "They have Moses and the Prophets." They are probably faithful synagogue-attending and Sabbath-keeping Jews. But they do not believe the word of God, and they do not care for the needs of those who literally sleep right outside their gate.

So, which are you, the rich man or Lazarus? Are you a superficially religious person who has hardened his heart to the word of God and the needs of people? Are you someone who is determined to get "your good things" in this life? Or are you humbly depending on the Lord and trusting in Him, despite whatever adversity He brings into your life? Do you trust Him that your lasting treasures and pleasures are yet to come?

Are you the rich man or are you Lazarus?