Part 2: Jesus Teaches on Wealth
Luke 16

This seems to continue Jesus' teaching session that began in Luke 15. If so, there would be listening publicans and _sinners_, Pharisees and _scribes_, along with His faithful disciples. Jesus now moves to the subject of _wealth_. He realizes the strong hold riches can place on the heart of man. He speaks first to His disciples and then to the need of the Religious Leaders. The story of the rich man and Lazarus is part of the lesson for the Pharisees.

Part 1: Review

Jesus Teaches about Wealth to the Disciples v. 1-13 It really should not be too surprising that Jesus began to teach on wealth after the publicans and sinners "drew near…to hear him." (Luke 15:1) They certainly needed to learn godly truths about earthly wealth. But please realize, all people, rich or poor, young or old, need to understand God's heart concerning wealth. Why? 1 Timothy 6 gives us some great points!

- So the rich don't depend on riches, but learn how to use them for eternal benefit. (v. 17)
- So the poor don't place such a strong desire on gaining wealth, remembering treasure in heaven is more important anyway. (v. 6-8)
- So the young don't live with a driving pursuit of money and possessions but instead lay up eternal treasure. (v. 9-10)
- So the old realize that God gave them all they have accumulated to aid others and bring more into the Kingdom. (v. 18-19)

Let's review this teaching of Jesus that He gave to his penniless disciples, who had given up all to follow Him, and to the publican and sinners who may have had quite a bit of wealth.

- "make to yourselves _friends_ of the mammon of unrighteousness" v. 9 – What a practical lesson! We all need to remember that money, wealth, and possessions are not bad or evil, but actually should be our friend. We should be familiar and comfortable with it… not love it or be solely dedicated to it, but know how to earn, spend, save, and then use it for eternal reward.

- "when ye fail, they may _receive_ you into everlasting habitations" v. 9 – Jesus often taught the truth of sending ahead treasure in heaven, so when you arrive there one day, you will be greeted by it! You know true heavenly treasure is people: people you have helped bring to heaven; those you have taught and discipled; those you have generously aided here on earth.

- "Ye cannot _serve_ God and mammon" v. 13 – Remember, the word "serve" actually means slave! This week our pastor put it this way, "Who are you going to work for?" Wow! Are you going to work for God or money? Again, one of the greatest tests of our faithfulness to God is how we use our money!

Jesus Answers the Pharisees' Covetousness v. 14-18

- "the Pharisees also, who were _covetous_, heard all thing things" v.14 – I'm afraid the Pharisees would have rivaled the publicans when it came to loving money! Remember, they taught "Whom the Lord loves, He makes rich." So they tried to prove God's pleasure on them through all kinds of schemes to

become wealthy. No one strutted around more, showing off their riches, than the Religious Leaders of Jesus' day.

But Jesus went on to say,

- "God _knoweth_ your hearts" v. 15 – and they were an abomination before Him! He knew their pride and hypocrisy, and Jesus called them out over it again and again. Let me remind you, during Jesus' ministry, it wasn't the pagan Roman government He struggled against; it wasn't thieves, prostitutes, and murderers that opposed Him; it was the wicked Religious Leaders of Israel!

- "one tittle of the law to _fail_" v. 17 – Why did Jewish leadership reject Jesus? Because they were ultimately opposed to God's word! But here Jesus told them that none of His Father's promises would fail; all of His judgments would be fulfilled; and every principle would be found true! God's Word would stand forever!

And that day Jesus gave them a straightforward example of their rejection of God's law…

- "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth _adultery_" v.18 – Because of their covetous, lustful hearts, divorce for no reason was a practice among the Pharisees. The law revealed God's heart concerning marriage, and Jesus later emphasized it in Matthew 19:6: "Once joined→no dividing!" Wonder if that would sell at Hobby Lobby? I'm not too sure! But here Jesus is looking those adulterers in the eye and saying, "You are breaking God's unfailing law!"

And then he goes on to tell the story of the rich man and Lazarus. It reveals to the Pharisees that their riches will do them no good in eternity, but it also affirms the strength and sufficiency of the Word of God! These are truths they needed to understand!

Jesus Continues to Teach about Wealth to the Sneering Pharisees

Part 2: Rich Man and Lazarus v. 19-31

Parable or Life Event: There was a little chatter in my study books and commentaries about the possibility that this was not a story or parable at all, but a true event known to Jesus. The main evidence for this view is that one of the main characters, **Lazarus, is named**, and the **passage does not call it a parable**. I don't want to spend too much time on this, because it cannot be proved either way, but I lean toward the view that this was a parable. First of all, because **the ability to communicate between Abraham and the rich man is not consistent with any other Scripture**. Second, parables are not always labeled as parables, and lastly, the **coincidence of the poor man's name: Lazarus**. This is the same name as Martha and Mary's brother, whom Jesus will raise from the dead in just a few short weeks! Please keep in mind that whether truth or fiction, Jesus employed this story in the same fashion as a parable – to teach a lesson! So, let's examine it!

I. Contrasts in Life

"There was a certain _rich_ man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: [20]And there was a certain _beggar_ named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, [21]And desiring to be fed with the _crumbs_ which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came

and licked his sores. [22]And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the _angels_ into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was _buried_;" Luke 16:19-22

Let's begin by moving through the verses and writing down the recorded contrasts between these two men! Realize the dramatic contrasts Jesus paints for us!
Life for the Rich Man:
"clothed in purple and fine linen" – everyday was a magnificent display of textile extravagance; these are the clothes of royalty and the very elite of the world; regal splendor; dyes and fabric from afar
"fared sumptuously every day" – this phrase refers to food; luxurious, splendid feasting; the wording indicates that he entertained and banqueted every day!

The description Jesus gave of the rich man was absolutely over-the-top luxury. Everyone listening would have been overwhelmed with the excess and flamboyance of this wealthy man. Most in the crowd would have admired and even envied him for his "life was a party," no hardship existence!

Life for Lazarus:
"laid at his gate" – evidently, Lazarus could not walk and was brought in hopes of receiving some charity
"full of sores"/"the dogs came and licked his sores" – this man was in misery and pain; he could not help himself, and scavenging wild dogs could get to him and make his life even more miserable.
"desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table" – I'm afraid we might not read this carefully. Notice, Lazarus didn't want leftovers from the big banquets or a plate from the festive feasts! But instead, just the crumbs from the floor! We are talking about what might have fallen from a plate or a rich guest's fork and found its way underfoot, only to be swept up later with a broom! Wow!

The description Jesus gave of the Lazarus the beggar was absolutely over-the-top repulsive and disgusting. One study book said Jesus made him "as bad as it gets!"

But then came the great leveler – death! We are told that angels carried Lazarus to Abraham's bosom, and simply that the rich man died and was buried.

It is interesting to note that Jesus said nothing about the spiritual lives of these two men. He didn't hint at their faith in God; He left that detail entirely to the listener. Let's consider a few questions:

- **What do you think they surmised about Lazarus' faith in God**? Everyone listening that day would have been overwhelmed with the pathetic misery of this poor man. In their view, he had all the signs of divine disfavor and God's contempt!
- **What do you think they thought was the spiritual heart of the rich man**? In their view, he had all the signs of divine favor and God's blessing.
- **What was the basis of the listeners' conclusion about the spirituality of both these men?** The Religious Leaders' teachings about wealth at the time of Jesus.

II. Contrasts in Death

"And in _hell_ he lift up his eyes, being in _torments_, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his _bosom_. [24]And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am _tormented_ in this flame. [25]But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is _comforted_, and thou art _tormented_. [26]And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." Luke 16:23-26

- **How do you think the crowd would have reacted to the details Jesus gave about the rich man's and Lazarus' eventual eternal location?** It would have been scandalous to the listeners that day! This was completely backward to the general beliefs of the Jews during Jesus' life!

Comfort for Lazarus:
"Abraham's bosom" – This phrase is only found here and in Jewish writings. It expresses heaven and being in the company of Abraham and the other patriarchs of Israel. It speaks of the great honor and delight of being with them!
"now he is comforted" – Everything about Lazarus' new life was one of joy and comfort. He had known "evil things" in life but now only comfort.

Torment for the Rich Man:
"hell" – The Greek word here is "hades," generally used to describe the "place/abode of the dead." When used in the New Testament, it refers to the place of the wicked dead! Outside of this story, there is very little description of Hades in the Old or New Testaments. So, one must be careful not to assume too much about Hades from these narratives and to stay within the boundaries of Jesus' ultimate teachings.
"torments" – Count how many times Jesus uses this word in connection with the rich man. Four times! v. 23, 24, 25, 28 This word means extreme forms of human suffering. Let's look over this passage and name what might be meant as torments: seeing "Abraham afar off;" "Lazarus in his bosom;" extreme thirst; extreme heat; flames; great separation from comfort; memories of earthly life; no hope of escape

I liked how J. Vernon McGee described this great role reversal: "The rich man becomes the beggar, while the beggar is now the rich man." p. 321

Jesus continues with a surprising twist in the story and, with it, another important lesson. When the rich man understood his hopeless, tormented existence, his mind turned to the five brothers he had left behind!
III. Concern in Torment

"Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: [28]For I have five _brethren_; that he may _testify_ unto them, lest they also come into this place of _torment_. [29]Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them _hear_ them. [30]And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. [31]And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one _rose_ from the dead." Luke 16:27-31

"I have five brethern" – The rich man wanted Abraham to send Lazarus to his five brothers. Why? To "testify" – to testify of what? The truth of hell's torments; to obey the words of God and to live so they don't come to the same place! Understanding his fate was set, the rich man turned his mind to his brothers still alive!

Don't miss this next important point: In verse 30, what did the rich man want his brothers to do? **Repent**
The rich man realized his brothers needed repentance – that he should have repented! Wow! Repentance leads to godly lives with service to God and humanity! And this was something he sorely lacked during his lifetime.

Let's consider the debate that the rich man instigated with Abraham!
Resurrected Lazarus vs. Moses and the prophets" – The rich man in hell thought he had a perfect, foolproof plan! Send a resurrected Lazarus back to his brothers! That would have been quite the miracle. But the truth is, we have learned from the life of Jesus that miracles don't produce faith! Hard hearts remain hard even with miracles all around them! Instead, Abraham told the rich man that they had Moses and the prophets; they were

the powerful tools needed to bring about faith! Jesus had just strongly alluded to the Pharisees' rejection of the law and prophets, in other words, the Word of God. They had picked and chosen what they wanted to follow and added their many hundreds of rules to it. They had rejected God's ways, character, and directions, and in doing so didn't utilize the power and sufficiency of God's Word! In this story, Jesus is telling them that God's words have more power than the words of a man who would come back from the dead! The Word of God actually has the power to overcome unbelief!

I want to make a few observations of this great story and the reversal of the rich man and Lazarus:

- The rich man desired mercy from Abraham, though he had given no mercy to Lazarus in his lifetime but wanted mercy now while in hell. Interesting!
- The rich man knew Lazarus in death, though we heard nothing of his knowledge of him in life. But, of course, we know the rich man was very busy living life completely for himself! Interesting!
- The rich man in hell still saw Lazarus below him in stasis – this really blows me away! He still sees Lazarus as little more than a servant to do his bidding! Throughout the rest of the story, he asks Lazarus twice to do something for him! Interesting!
- The rich man didn't lose his self-centered identity or consciousness. He was the same person, but he remembered his past life, cared about his brothers, still had a haughty attitude toward Lazarus, and had the wrong concept of God's word. John MacArthur had this to say, "The flames of hell do not atone for sin or purge hardened sinners from their depravity." p. 314 Interesting!

Believers' Application:

1. It is the power of the Word of God that can break the hold of sin and rebellion against God. Scripture brings people to Christ; nothing else – not even a miracle like someone rising from the dead! This is a comforting thought when we want to share the Gospel. It is not our cleverly worded phrases or ability to debate, but the Word of God that does the work! So be ready to share the truth of the Bible, for it has the power to turn them to Christ and change lives! Let's look at a few Bible verses that tell us this: John 5:39, 45-47; 8:31-32; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 1:23

2. In both of Jesus' parables in this teaching on wealth, they emphasized using riches to prepare for the future. This is an important principle for Jesus followers to understand and apply to their lives. Let's look at a few other Bible verses that teach this. **Read Matthew 6:19-21:** When it comes to your money, where is your heart? Do you spend it considering eternity, or on earthly pursuits or pleasures? Let's answer a few questions:
After the normal expenses of life, what do you do with your money?

- What do you spend money on? Earthly or heavenly treasures? pleasures; gifts, needs of others
- What do you buy for gifts? Earthly or heavenly treasures? Christmas, birthdays
- Do you regularly give to your church?
- Do you regularly give away money to needy people around you? Financial needs, those preparing for ministry or missions, ministries with Gospel focus
- Are you generous with your home and other assets? car, lawn mower, tools, toys

If you answer these questions truthfully, you will begin to see where your heart is when it comes to wealth! Does it please God? Is it building up treasure in heaven? Let's ask God to give us honest hearts and wisdom to use our wealth wisely!

3. Let's be careful not to be like the Pharisees and assume wealth and health are evidence of God's blessings. Let's look at a few other Bible verses concerning God's blessings. **Read Ephesians 1:3-14.** The greatest blessing of God is our salvation! v. 4 **chosen** of God to be holy; v. 5 **adopted** into His family; v. 6 **accepted** of God; v. 7 **redeemed**; our sins are **forgiven**; v. 8-9 **wisdom and understanding** for godliness; v. 10-11 **promise of heaven** and an **inheritance** v.13-14 given the gift of the **Holy Spirit**

So, because salvation is an amazing treasure from God, it is only reasonable that we should present our bodies, our money, our assets as living sacrifices back to Him. We should not be conformed to this sinful world, but changed and transformed by constantly setting our minds on Bible truth, so we can discern what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God when it comes to our money, our time, our energy, our lives! (Romans 12:2)