

# The Rich Man And Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31

## **MEMORY VERSE**

LUKE 16:31

"But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

## **WHAT YOU WILL NEED:**

As many small prizes (pencils, stickers, erasers, etc.) as the number of children in your class.

A roll or piece of bread or graham crackers.

Masking tape.

## **ATTENTION GRABBER!**

### **Choose Whom You Will Serve**

Pick one child from your class and serve him or her a small prize. Instruct the child that he or she may choose only one child to serve with another small prize. Continue the chain until every child in the class has been served.

Explain to the class that each of us must make a choice of whom we will serve. The Bible instructs us that we were created to serve the true and living God.

## LESSON TIME!

Our scripture today is often called the "Parable of the Rich Man & Lazarus." We have been studying quite a few of the Lord's parables in recent weeks. Remember, parable means to "throw down along side." Jesus would tell a story of everyday things, and at the same time, within the same story, He would lay down a very important spiritual truth.

One interesting thing about our scripture today is that Jesus did not call this a parable. We do not know for sure if it is a story He's using to teach a serious truth, or if this is a real account of something that happened. Jesus gives someone a name in this scripture. He did not do that in any other parable. But the most important thing is that we catch with our hearts the vital thing Jesus was teaching as He told this unusual and interesting story.

### LUKE 16:19-21

"There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.

"But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate,

"desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

Can you picture this scene? We have a great contrast pictured here. Two very different men in two extreme circumstances placed together in the same picture.

Let's look closely at these two men. What does it say about the first one? He was rich, clothed in purple. Purple was a color worn by the very rich. The dyes and processes it took to get the color

purple were very costly, and only rich people could wear this rich purple color. "Fared sumptuously," means he lived in luxury. He had all he wanted and was extremely comfortable.

The word sumptuously means that not only was he rich and comfortable but he was flamboyant about it. He actually showed off his wealth in every way that he could. He wanted others to look and take note of all his extravagant luxury. His wealth was used to get him attention. He wanted to be seen. He wanted his wealthy lifestyle to be noticed and acknowledged by everyone.

Who is the second man? A beggar named Lazarus. This man was one of the poorest of the poor. Not only was he poor, but he may have also been crippled because he was placed at the rich man's gate to beg. He was also "full" of sores. He must have been an alarming sight to anyone going to visit the rich man. The visitors would walk up to the beautiful entrance gate of the rich man's home and see Lazarus, covered in oozing sores, laying there helpless, hoping for a little scrap of food or a coin from whoever walked by.

People may have tossed Lazarus a few coins here and there, but it said he desired to be fed the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Wow! Lazarus knew of the flamboyant extravagance of this rich man and hoped for just a tiny portion of what the rich man would simply throw away. If this was not bad enough, the dogs would come and lick his open sores putting him in more pain and danger of worse infection.

It does not say the rich man ever reached out to try and make Lazarus more comfortable. The rich man had enough money to get Lazarus a doctor, bathe him and have soothing medicine applied to his wounds, even to hire a nurse to care for Lazarus' needs. But the rich man did not seem to really notice Lazarus or think of him as

another human being just like himself. He did not reach out a hand to help Lazarus. He just continued to show off his rich and luxurious lifestyle.

## **Hungry/Full**

Choose one child to act as a rich man, and instruct the rest of the class to act as beggars, dependant on the generosity of others for their sustenance. Space the "beggars" around the room and instruct the "rich man" to pass through them giving them crumbs of bread or a graham cracker as he wills.

After a while, have the "rich man" switch places with one of the "beggars" and proceed in the manner exemplified by the first "rich man." If time permits, give several children an opportunity to be the "rich man."

Ask several of the children what it felt like to be begging for bread with no response. Explain that this was Lazarus' entire existence. Ask a couple of the "rich men" to explain how they felt to have something everyone else wanted. Explain that the rich man in today's lesson had enough provision to meet the needs of others and still enjoy his wealth.

## **LUKE 16:22-23**

"So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.

"And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

We saw these men living on earth and they were in stark contrast. One was healthy and very rich, the other sick and very poor. But we find them both dying. Rich or poor, healthy or sick, eventually

we will all die. Death will eventually come to all men. We cannot escape it. We have to decide what we want to do with Jesus. He is the One that has conquered the great enemy of man called DEATH.

When we receive Jesus and His salvation, He gives us eternal life with Him in heaven. If we decide not to receive Jesus but rather to be lord of our own life and go our own way, we will be separated from God forever, which is the same horrible fate the rich man in our story had to experience. This scripture lets us know it is a real choice for all of us. **Christians will spend eternity in heaven.**

Our scripture does not tell us a lot about the hearts of these two men, but we see through their death that God had not looked on their outward appearance while on earth. He looked at their hearts. Lazarus, though poor and sick, must have had a trusting relationship with God. The rich man obviously only trusted in himself.

Where do they end up? It says Lazarus went to Abraham's Bosom. Angels carried him there. What a beautiful picture! On earth, only old dogs came and touched him, but in death, God's ministering angels carried him to paradise. The rich man ended up in a place of torment. This was a place where God's spirit did not minister. The rich man had said "no" to God while he was alive on earth, so God honored that choice when he died. He had said "I don't want God," and God honored the rich man's choice. The place that does not have God and His grace is a horrible place filled with pain and suffering. The rich man went to this place of torment because his riches had been his god, and he had said "no" with his life to the one true God.

When Jesus died and was resurrected, He emptied Abraham's Bosom and took everyone in that Paradise to the new Paradise of Heaven, which He had prepared. When we go to be with Jesus one day, we will go straight to heaven! How wonderful and glorious! All

of us who have said "yes" to Jesus as Lord and Savior will live in the beauty of His light in heaven forever. **Christians will spend eternity in heaven.**

### LUKE 16:24-26

"Then 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.'

"But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.

'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'

Before Jesus emptied Abraham's Bosom, it appears that those who turned their backs on God's way could see those who had chosen God; that would be torment in itself! The rich man was able to communicate with those in Paradise. He just wanted a drop of water put on his tongue. The place of torment he was in was so hot and dry. All he wanted was for Lazarus to put a single drop of water on his tongue. He must have recognized Lazarus. And Lazarus must have no longer been crippled because the rich man saw that Lazarus looked like he was able to come to him.

The rich man was told that the great gulf fixed between them could not be crossed. The choice had been made in life on earth, and God was now honoring that choice. What choice would you have made? There are so many reasons to choose Jesus as Savior and Lord. The only reason we would not want to choose Jesus is if we

chose our way instead, if we chose our own selfish desires over God's perfect plan. Choosing self over Jesus will always lead us right where the rich man was.

Jesus always tells us the whole truth. He does not leave bits and pieces out. He told us exactly what He requires to take our sin from us and give us His righteousness. It took the sacrifice of Jesus, God's perfect Son. Jesus took our place so we would not have to go to hell and be without God, lost in our sin. When we receive God's wonderful provision of a Savior, we choose to put God's will in front of our own. The rich man in our story had not done that, but Lazarus had. Jesus wants us to see the end result of choosing self over Jesus. **Christians will spend eternity in heaven.** When we say "no" to God, He will honor that choice and send us to a place without His presence, a place of torment and flame. That is the truth. Jesus told us the truth.

## The Uncrossable Gulf

Tape two pieces of masking tape parallel to each other at a distance far enough away from each other that a child would not be able to jump across it.

Instruct the children to try to jump the gulf one at a time. Give a child a piece of paper and instruct him to give it to the child on the other side without crossing the line or throwing it. Both of these attempts should be fruitless.

Explain that it was impossible for the rich man to have any contact with Lazarus. It would have been impossible for Lazarus to come to any aide of the rich man, even if he had wanted to.

### LUKE 16:27-31

"Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house,



'for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'

"Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'

"And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'

"But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

The rich man wanted Lazarus to go warn his brothers about what would happen if they kept putting themselves before God, choosing self over God. What does Jesus' story tell us? It lets us know that men have been told the truth about life and death in God's Word and many still do not listen. Jesus also knew (verse 31) that He was soon going to die for the sins of the world, and He would rise from the dead. Jesus lets us know we have a choice to make about Him and the end result of that choice.

We know the truth from the very Word of God. He is honest and gave us the whole picture. He even showed us what happens after death. He wanted us to read this very shocking story so we would seriously think about one of life's big questions "What happens when I die?" **Christians will spend eternity in heaven.**

We make our reservations now for what happens later. Death will come to each one of us; no one escapes it. What have we decided to do with the provision God made for us in His Son, Jesus Christ? It is a very simple choice, because when we say "Yes" to Jesus, we get to go to heaven with Him forever (John 14). **Christians will spend eternity in heaven.**

When we say "no" to Jesus, it is like we are saying yes to Hell. Hell is a godless place of everlasting torment. It is the one place where God's presence is completely absent, and those who will go there are those who want nothing to do with God's presence in their lives now. He does not send anyone there. They choose to go, and He honors their choice. What have you chosen today? Let's be like Lazarus and choose eternal life!

## **PRAYER**

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for the provision of Heaven through the sacrifice of Jesus. This is a powerful story and a great opportunity to share the gospel. If any children have not responded to the gospel, give them an opportunity to do so.