

7

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31

Jesus issued a strong warning about greed. He said, *“Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.”* He dramatized His warning with the story of a farmer whose crops were so abundant that his barns wouldn’t hold them. This man thought all he had to do to solve his problem was to build bigger barns. God called him a fool, saying, *“You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?”* To this, Jesus added, *“So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”*¹

Wealth and fame may not come to many of us, but death will surely come to all. Any of us can enjoy an infinitely better death-style by being rich toward God!

1. How much concern do you see in people around you about life after death? How does this compare with their concerns for money?

2. How much money does it take to make a person rich?

3. What was the occasion for this story? (See Luke 16:14) What does this have to do with our interpretation of it?

¹ Luke 12:15-21

4. Read verse 19. Describe what this rich man might have been like.

5. Read verse 20-21. Describe a typical day in the life of this poor man. What significance do the dogs have in the story? We might be inclined to react with revulsion to people living under similar, filthy, disease-ridden conditions. How should we deal with such things today?

6. Read verse 22-24. What did the angels do in these verses? Do you think this is a typical picture of death for someone who pleases God? Where was Lazarus taken? Where did the rich man go? What do these verses reveal about the afterlife? Of what are the words “*send Lazarus*” reminiscent?

7. Read v. 25-26. What was the rich man told when his cries for help went unanswered? What significance might the words “*during your life*” have to do with us? Is this a picture of “purgatory”? Why or why not? What significance would the “*great chasm*” have?

8. Read verses 27-31. Notice the plea by the former rich man for a special messenger to be sent back to relatives on earth. Why wasn't someone sent? Do you think the former rich man was short changed in the knowledge of these things while he was on earth? Were his relatives short-changed?

The Greatest Stories Ever Told

9. What is the significance of the phrase, “*neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead*”? Do you think that great miracles like resurrection from the dead would change men’s hearts any more than God’s special messengers (prophets)? Why doesn’t God do miracles today like He did in the first century?

10. Even if this story is a parable (as opposed to being a true account), the description of the “*torment*” and the “*great chasm fixed*” speaks of a chilling reality. How much do you think this should be emphasized today?

11. Should this story impact the way we deal with poor people?