

Message Summary

A parable is a teaching thrown alongside of real life. Christ's parables are more than stories; they are the essential words of God Himself with eternal stakes. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Christ introduces two polarized figures. The first is wealthy. Very wealthy. His clothing is purple, the color of luxury and wealth (cf. Acts 16:14). He feasts sumptuously on lavish food every day. His mansion was surrounded by a gate, rare in Jesus' day. In contrast, the second (named Lazarus) is poor. Very poor. He is crippled (rendering him unable to work), sick with sores, and hungry. Dogs, the local pests, came to lick his wounds (cf. 2 Kings 9:30-37).

Their eternal destinies are as polarized as their earthly ones, but in opposite directions. Lazarus, in abject poverty on earth, goes to heaven. There, he receives the place of highest honor as seated next to Abraham, the patriarch of the Jewish faith and people, in the eternal banquet. Not so for the rich man. He is consigned to the agony of Hades, where he cries out for help. He calls for mercy from Lazarus, the man to whom he showed no mercy with his earthly, material goods, to have a small respite from Hades' flames. The chasm between their opposite destinies will not allow it. In a second effort, the rich man cries out for Lazarus to be resurrected from the dead to warn his five brothers about the torment he now feels. Rather than being concerned for the entire world's salvation, the rich man seems selfishly concerned only with his own household.

Abraham will not allow it, on account of the fact that his household already has the testimony of God in the Scriptures (which Abraham summarizes as "Moses and the Prophets," vv. 29, 31). The rich man objects. He says in essence, "I, too, had the Scriptures, and refused to believe. But surely they will believe if a witness rises from the dead!" Many, in Jesus' day and our own, neglect God's perfect revelation in the Scriptures and seek after miraculous signs. On one occasion, when the Pharisees sought such a miraculous sign, Jesus assured them that no sign would be offered except the sign of Jonah, the Biblical book. Hearts hard enough to reject God's Word are also hard enough to explain away any miracles Christ may have done. To reject the Scriptures is ultimately to reject their Author and Subject. Scripture is enough because it is the revelation of Christ, and Christ is enough (Lk. 24:25-27). Christ, the Author and Subject of this parable, would soon endure anguish on behalf of the disobedient (Is. 53:11), so that we who are spiritually poor might receive the comfort of the gospel (2 Cor. 1:3-4). This same Christ points us back to the Scriptures which point to Him, to know, love, and preach the good news about Him as we eagerly await His return.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Why is the poor man named (Lazarus) and the rich man not named? What is Jesus showing us about earthly status versus eternal glory?

Why is searching for miraculous signs to prove God's existence such a tantalizing temptation? What forms does this temptation take today?

In what way is "having the Scriptures even better than being with Jesus"? In what ways is Scripture an even better witness Christ than a miraculous sign or resurrected witness?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don't have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family/small group discussion.

1. Are you prone to neglect the Scriptures and instead look for miraculous signs?
2. Do you see Christ as the great Subject of the Scriptures, or do you more often search for a moral lesson or interesting history lesson?
3. How can you cultivate a more robust love for and meditation on the Scriptures this week?
4. Like the rich man, do you invest all resources into earthly treasures and live for worldly comfort? Are you anxious about the worldly goods you work so hard to produce and maintain (cf. Lk. 12:13-34)?
5. Like the rich man who was only concerned for his five brothers, do you limit your interest in spiritual welfare only to your own household? Or are you passionate about seeing the gospel proclaimed among all nations?
6. What is your attitude towards the poor? Are you busy helping the poor with material and spiritual good, or like the rich man do you neglect them? (Consider especially 1 John 3:16-18). How can you better engage the poor around you this week?

Prayer

- Pray for Our Church:
 - Thank God for Christ's enduring anguish for us, so that we can enjoy the comfort of his righteousness as a gift.
 - Pray that God would give us a trust in the Scriptures as God's perfect and sufficient revelation of Himself. Pray that He would protect us from looking for miraculous signs or wonders in its place.
- Pray for Our Community:
 - Pray that the Lord would give us a heart to preach the gospel to all creatures (vv. 27-28; Mk. 16:15). Pray that we would proclaim faithfully to our own households, but also beyond them to our entire community.
 - Pray that our church would faithfully love the poor He sovereignly lays by the "gates" of our lives so often. Pray that we would love in both material and spiritual needs through Christ's gospel.
- Pray for Our World:
 - Pray that our church would embrace the pure and faultless religion of caring for orphans in their distress (Jm. 1:27), locally and globally. Pray that the Lord would bless the efforts of the many families already providing adoption and/or foster care, and raise up more families. Pray that every individual and family in our congregation would be part of the work through support, help, and encouragement.
 - Thank God for the Teal family's recent adoption, and pray that the Lord would give this family the grace to raise children in the "discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).