



Journey to Jerusalem

LENT 2022

Growth Group Curriculum Week 4 – March 27, 2022 – Luke 16:19-31

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at church. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

As Jesus continues to make his way to Jerusalem he tells another parable, and as is often the case, this one is directed toward the Jewish religious leaders. It begins with the phrase, “There was a man” which is how Jesus begins a number of parables in the gospel of Luke. You may recall from last week that our parable began with “There was a man who had two sons...” Our parable for today is about a wealthy man who remains unnamed and a beggar named Lazarus. This is the only parable that Jesus tells where a person is given a name.

This parable was not original to Jesus. The reversal of roles described between this life and the next was well-known in Egyptian and Jewish folklore, and Jesus may have borrowed some of those materials for his parable. What is different about this parable is the wealthy man asking for Lazarus to be sent to his brothers, so that they might repent and begin living faithfully.

The wealthy man has everything and Lazarus has nothing, yet in the end Lazarus ends up in “paradise” and the wealthy man ends up in Hades, or the place of the dead. There is a warning in this parable about building a life that does not include God. Financial blessings in this life does not equate to all going well in the end. The rich man never acknowledged Lazarus, nor did he remember the Scriptures that called him to care for people in need. He just kept walking by him just like the priest and Levite did in the Good Samaritan parable.

The teachers of the law had a very different understanding of financial blessings than Jesus did. Jesus had warned them earlier, in Luke 16, that a person could not love God and mammon/money. He said you cannot serve two masters because you will be devoted to one and despise the other. This parable serves as a reminder that financial blessing in this world does not guarantee God’s blessing in the world that is to come.



The rich man has concerns for his brothers. He does not want them to make the same mistakes he made and so he pleads for Lazarus to be sent to warn his brothers. Abraham's response is that they will still not repent. The wealthy man is convinced that someone coming back from the dead would change their mind, but in the end Jesus knows that is not the case.

Jesus is trying to get his listeners to see and understand that all of the prophets and law have been pointing to his arrival. People must now decide what to do - will they follow Jesus or will they turn their backs on him.

Exploring the Text

Luke 16:19-31

¹⁹“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. ²⁰At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores ²¹and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²²“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ ²⁵“But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. ²⁶And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’ ²⁷“He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, ²⁸for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ ²⁹“Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them listen to them.’ ³⁰“‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ ³¹“He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

- 1) Share about a time when you were late and there were negative consequences. Do you have a problem when other people are late or when you are running late?
- 2) Lazarus comes from the Hebrew name Eleazar which means “he whom God has helped.” Why do you think Jesus gives this poor beggar a name, when he doesn't give names to anyone else in his parables?
- 3) The parable tells us that Lazarus died and was carried to Abraham by the angels. Lazarus was known on earth as a poor beggar covered with soars, and yet when he dies he is given a heavenly escort by the angels. What point do you think Jesus is trying to make with this reversal of fortunes?
- 4) The wealthy man dies and is buried, but there is no angelic escort. The wealthy man ignored people in need and now there is judgment and justice. Do you have issues with Jesus using images like Hades and people being in torment? Or are you okay with it, because some people deserve justice for what they have done.

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- 5) Jesus came proclaiming a message that seems to have both justice and grace. How do you reconcile those two ideas particularly as it relates to living out our faith in the world.
- 6) Showing grace is a choice, and not always an easy choice. Talk about a time when you showed grace to someone. Talk about what sometimes keeps you from showing grace to others.
- 7) Father Abraham says even if I send a “resurrected” Lazarus, your brothers will not believe or repent. Have you ever felt like you had a moment in your life where Jesus showed up or where Jesus was talking to you and you just missed it?
- 8) Is there something you could be doing to be more responsive to the lost and lonely people around you who are searching for hope?

