

## Great Gulf

Luke 16:19-31

- We'll read a passage today that is, in many ways, unique in the New Testament
- Some may think of it as a parable, but it names one of the men involved, so...probably isn't
- And it's never called a parable
- Furthermore, it doesn't fit the usual definition, which is "a presentation of a spiritual truth using an earthly illustration"
- This is quite different, which is why I called it unique
- It presents spiritual truth directly, with no earthly metaphor
- We call it "The rich man and Lazarus," and we find it in Luke 16
- Today we'll talk about the "Great Gulf" that was fixed between these two
  
- Whether a true account or a parable, it provides many important details
- And a quite realistic image of Hell
- It is vivid enough to get anyone's attention
- And it will be our focus of the day - that is - Luke 16:19-31
  
- This is a lengthy passage, with much to examine
- So it is probably best to forego preliminaries
- This is how Jesus begins the account...

Luke 16:19-20

19 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,

- These two men live very different lives
- The first is wealthy
- He is described here as a person "abounding in material resources"
- He wore expensive clothing colored with purple dye
- And he was able to enjoy all the best things every day
  
- The other man was quite poor
- He must have been, for he begged others for money
- He was destitute of wealth
- He was needy and in poor health, having ulcers on his body
- And while the rich man lived inside a house with a gate, this man laid outside
  
- The contrast couldn't be clearer, from the very beginning
- One man lives in comfort, while the other, Lazarus, suffers
- The text has further detail of his suffering...

Luke 16:21-22

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;

- Just that which fell from the rich man's table would have been a delight for Lazarus
- Helpless, he lay while the dogs came and licked his sores
  
- Still, because death is common to man, both died
- In this, there was no difference between them
- They were sinners by birth and sinners by choice
- And the wages of their sin, like ours, was death
  
- After death, we find more contrast
- Angels carry the beggar to what's called "Abraham's bosom"
- While the rich man is simply "buried"
  
- But we find out more about their location after death as we continue...

Luke 16:23

23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

- In death, Lazarus (it appears) was carried to a place where the patriarchs of faith resided
- A place of care and comfort
- As though he were at the place of honor during a banquet
- But the rich man was tormented
- This means he experienced "acute pains"
- No sign of a banquet or of resting on the banquet host's bosom
- No care, as though from a father
- And no comfort, but rather, exactly the opposite
  
- An then the rich man cried...

Luke 16:24

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.

- Here we see the rich man was in flame
- And he desires for but a little relief
- We may recall that in life Lazarus desired just a crumb of food from his table
- In some similarity, the rich man desires only for his tongue to be cooled by a drop of water
- This alone, would have been a mercy to him in his torment
  
- Then Abraham reminds him...

#### Luke 16:25-26

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.

- The tables have well and truly turned
- A lifetime on earth of wealth and comfort seemed so distant to this rich man now
- The same could be said of Lazarus' troubles and trials
- They were long gone
  
- But life was temporary
- And they were now in their permanent places of residence for eternity
- With no way to cross the gulf between one destination and the other
- For that gap can never be crossed
  
- And we are left wondering how this happened
- Are rich men, then, deserving of punishment and poor men deserving of comfort?
- The next few verses are a big help in explaining...

#### Luke 16:27-28

27 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.

- Now, the rich man has become the beggar
- The rich man begs Abraham to send word to his brethren
- He wants them to be warned of the torments awaiting them
- He cannot go back, but perhaps someone else can testify that God's wrath is real
- But no special message would be prepared for them, for God had already spoken
- Abraham declares as much...

#### Luke 16:29

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

- God's word is testimony enough
- He has spoken clearly
- In Moses and the prophets Israel have a multitude of encouragements to trust the One True God
- To follow Him in faith
- To be His and His alone
- They are warned not to reject His way
- They are provided with truth of a coming Messiah
- And many had faith
- They are spoken about in Hebrews 11, which starts...

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report."

- And further says...

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

- Of Abraham himself, Hebrews 11 says...

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

- And of Abraham's wife...

"Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised."

- Here and in following verses others are named as well, it says of them...

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

- But the rich man fails to accept it...

Luke 16:30-31

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.

- When will you believe?
- When will you trust what the Bible tells you?
- About Christ as the exclusive means of salvation for all mankind?
- When someone comes back from the dead to tell you?
- Or will you believe the testimony God has already provided in His scriptures?

*Christopher Harper, Take Note 2023*