



Good News for all people.

The Gospel of Luke

Week 16 LEADER Discussion Questions

Week of 1/22/23

Text: Luke 16:19-31

Icebreaker: What did you find most helpful from last week's sermon and discussion on the parable of the dishonest manager?

The last question this week is asking us to consider what we can learn both from last week's parable ("the dishonest manager") and this week's parable.

1. Verses 19-21 set the stage for this parable. How do the daily experiences of the rich man and Lazarus compare?

The rich man is described as wearing luxurious, expensive clothing and eating every day what would normally only be possible on special occasions...and that only for the small set of select people who had the means. He lives in a home that has a gate and a table, and it's likely that we should imagine a large home and table. On the flip side, the poor man's existence is physically painful (he has sores and is hungry) and passive (he has to be carried). He's either crippled or paralyzed. He is unable to even scare away the dogs that lick his sores. This man is completely dependent on others to care for him.

Application: Where do you see similar contrasts in our day between people who are in close proximity with each other?

A better question might be where *don't* we see this? In Boulder, for example, pockets of mobile home communities are surrounded by neighborhoods with multimillion dollar homes. Homeless people walk the same sidewalks as people with advanced research degrees. Similar contrasts can be found in Erie and Thornton.

2. Verses 22-23 depict a great reversal of experiences for both Lazarus and the rich man. What do these verses—and the testimony of other passages—indicate about the relationship between comfort in this life and blessing in the life to come?

It's important to point out one thing they don't say: that riches automatically lead to hell and being poor leads to heaven. What they do tell us is that one's level of material wealth or blessing in this life does not extend into the life to come. The blessings of the life to come are determined by a present life of faith in Jesus. This is simple, yet hard to grasp if we feel envious of those who have more material possessions than we do. That kind of envy can inspire us to live for the moment (i.e., acquiring more) rather than having the perspective of eternity in mind.

Application: Do you find that material abundance in this life is helpful, is a hindrance, or is irrelevant to living the kind of life now that leads to the blessings of eternity? Why?

Wealth can be a great blessing but also a burden. How does one with a lot of resources not place their hope in those resources or spend them on self-gratification? Many have fallen into this trap.

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3. What kind of attitude is reflected in the rich man's requests to Abraham in verses 24-31? Do you think his words reveal a change of heart from his actions while he was still alive?

Notice how the unnamed rich man knows the name of this poor man, likely indicating that he knew who Lazarus was in his lifetime yet didn't help him. Now, in the afterlife, the rich man is still adopting an air of superiority over Lazarus, asking him to be sent to take care of his terrible thirst. There's no hint of repentance or humility, but only a continuation of the same kind of self-serving attitude. Also, note how the rich man also is asking for a special favor from Abraham (and, by implication, God) by requesting that Lazarus be sent to the brothers. Again, Lazarus is merely a servant to be sent out. God's Word, as well, is not enough for the rich man. He needs special treatment.

Application: What kind of values, habits, or perspectives can get in the way of the rich generously sharing out of their abundance with those who are poor?

Selfishness, self-centeredness, and any other perspective that looks down on others can be traps for those who have a lot of resources. The wealth of this world can, if it's not handled properly, become a kind of validation of self-importance at the expense of those who don't have as much. Pleasure and comfort can also become obstacles. It's fun to be able to enjoy the best this world has to offer, but decadence can easily become something that prevents generosity and humility.

4. It's possible to read too much into this parable's description of what the eternal state will be like (e.g., that those in torment will be able to talk to Abraham), but what are 2-3 clear teachings from this parable about what happens after death?

Here are a few: (1) We see that there is an afterlife. We don't simply cease to exist once we die. (2) The afterlife includes either the experience of the blessings of God or the absence of those blessings. (3) There's no traveling between either the place of God's blessings or the place of the absence of God's blessings. (4) This is implied more than overtly stated, but hell is not a place of repentance. The rich man isn't asking for forgiveness or even to travel out of hell to where Lazarus is. Instead, he merely wants relief from his torment.

Application: How do these principles or teachings compare with what people around us believe about what happens after death?

There could be a lot of different answers here, but people today commonly believe that either we cease to exist once we die or that everyone goes to heaven...or at least everyone except Hitler and people like him.

5. What do verses 29-31 tell us about the primary means God has established to communicate to humanity about salvation? What's the danger of only hearing the message of Scripture but not living according to it?

These verses express how the OT law (i.e., "Moses") and prophets are both sufficient and authoritative for salvation. We could apply the same authority and sufficiency to all of Scripture for salvation (2 Tim 3:14-17). The parable implies that the rich man and his brothers were familiar with both the Law and Prophets. They were Jewish men who would have been immersed in a culture of hearing the OT read and taught, yet they lived in a way that failed to apply it to their lives for salvation.

Application: What do these verses imply about the value and authority of God's Word for our lives? Can you think of a danger of being in a place where we hear a lot about it but don't necessarily feel compelled to live according to it? How can we guard against that?

Some of us have spent all our lives in the church and have heard Scripture taught over and over again. Our familiarity with God's Word, then, can deceive us into thinking we must be living in a way that's pleasing to God because we know a lot about God. There

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could be more than one good step to take to guard against this, but the most helpful steps might be to commit to regular time in God's Word and in prayer (both privately and corporately, with others). Along with this, ask other believers around you to observe your life—your humility, generosity, and commitment to Christian service. What outward signs demonstrate the inward work of God's Spirit in your life? Your LifeGroup is hopefully a community where these things are already taking place.

6. Application: Based on these two parables from the past two weeks in Luke 16, is there some way you have felt challenged to use your possessions, including money, differently? Explain what you mean.

If you use this question, you may want to start with takeaways from this passage and then take a few minutes to refresh your memory about last week's parable with the dishonest manager. Overall, hopefully you can see how money is a resource or instrument to be used for eternal purposes. The old comparison goes something like this and might be helpful: *Use money to love people. Don't love money and use people.*

Finally, it's good to remember that the reason Jesus is emphasizing money is that "The Pharisees...were lovers of money" (Luke 16:14). Let's be honest that it's a love of our day as well. Even so, there are plenty of other obstacles we might trip over (career success, social status, family, education, etc.) that can also cause us to serve something other than God.