

The Rich Man and Lazarus (Part 1)

Luke: All Things New



Series Goal

That Mercy Hill Church would be made new as we follow the One who is making all things new!



Sermon Text

Luke 16:19-31



Big Idea

Eternity hangs on what we do in the present—what we make of God, of Jesus, and how this is reflected in our use of money and possessions. It may feel at times as if God has abandoned us in the here and now, but He is always present, ever-watchful, and will make all right in His time.

(1) We Must Beware the Pitfall of Present-Tense Thinking

If this present moment is everything, if this life is all there is, then the rich man wins, he is the wiser, right? But suddenly in v. 22 of our text the future tense breaks in, and everything changes! The reality of both men's death is stated in an almost unfeeling and matter-of-fact way. And I think that's probably the point. Death is a cold, hard fact. It is an impending reality. There is nothing we can do to prevent or escape it. Here is why I say there is a pitfall with present-tense thinking. We get so caught up with things in the present moment that we fail to take into consideration the whole timeline. We act as if what is right in front of us is the ultimate, and we fail to prepare ourselves for what is coming, for what truly endures. We forget that we have a soul—that we are not mere animals, but the Spirit of God has been breathed into us, and we are eternal beings who will pass on from here into forever. And this what we see play out in our parable. In these verses, we come to find that death not only levels everyone down to size, it puts everyone in their proper place. God will make what has been wrong right.

(2) We Must Not Read God's Countenance Off of Our Earthly Circumstances

Sometimes, to be sure, God's wrath is expressed as Him bringing upon a person earthly punishment, but at other times, as in Romans 1, it is expressed in Him handing you over to everything you desire. (Life going really well for you while you are on your way to hell is not a sign of God's favor but of His abandoning of you to your doomed fate.) On the flip, sometimes God's favor is expressed in His bringing material and circumstantial blessing upon you for your faithfulness, but other times, as in Romans 5, it is expressed in His bringing trials that purify and refine and build in you the character befitting of one of His children. (Life going really hard for you can be a sign of God's fatherly care and discipline, though I know you might not feel it as such in the moment!) Instead, if we really are to know what God is feeling about us, we are told, not to look at our we are currently faring in an earthly sense, but rather to look at the cross.

(3) Even When All the World Has Forgotten You, God Still Knows Your Name

In all the parables Jesus tells throughout the gospels, this is the only parable in which we are given one of the character's names. "And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus . . ." That is deeply significant! And, of course, the point is not that we know this man's name but that God does.

Reflection Questions



- How would you say you've been tempted towards "present-tense thinking" lately? Describe the situation. How would a consideration of future-tense realities like death and eternity change your perspective? How would such a perspective influence your actions?
- Have you ever tried to read God's countenance off of your earthly circumstances? Honestly, how has His countenance seemed towards you lately? Has He felt for you or against you? Why? How does the cross of Christ keep us balanced on this point. Read Romans 8:31-39. What does this mean to you? Do you really believe it? What would change about your life if you did?
- Have you ever felt forgotten by God? How does the fact that He knows your name minister to you even now? What have you been attaching your name to? What have you been building your identity on? God or perishable possessions and pursuits? What would it look like to shift more towards God with this?