

Luke 16:19-31

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[0 : 00] Now, a second reading from the Word of God comes from the Gospel according to Luke and chapter 16, part of the passage which we read in the morning.

Luke chapter 16 and verse 19. And if you are here in the morning, you'll remember that the main theme of this whole chapter is how to deal with worldly wealth, how we should do it and how we should use it.

There are two parables and this second one is addressed especially to the Pharisees. But of course to us all. So let's hear it in verse 19.

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table.

Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side.

[1 : 28] The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.

So he called to him, Father of 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.

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. And besides all this, between us and you, a great chasm has been fixed.

So that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us. He answered, Then I beg you, Father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers.

[2 : 39] Let him warn them so that they will not also come to this place of torment. Abraham replied, They have Moses and the prophets.

Let them listen to them. No, Father Abraham, he said, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.

He said to them, If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced, even if someone rises from the dead.

Again, we pray that God will accompany the reading of his own word with his blessing. And let's sing now from Psalm 17, and that's on page 19.

Psalm 17, and that's on page 19.

[4 : 00] Psalm 17, and that's on page 19.

Psalm 17, and that's on page 19. Psalm 17, and that's on page 19. These verses, then, again, standing to sing. Amen. This, then, again, relating to the singly of the Lord, somebody who loves him to the Lord.

Psalm 17, and that's on page 19. in the name of the Lord. Psalm 17, and that's on page 19. How are you, God, nggak there? I claim that you're trybilyor. Say your love today, God, not beyond the Lord.

You say rarely by high or light. The kid loves you, God, he's like near thee. Psalm 17, and that's on page 19. He's like enam ele, God. champion this, the high or light.

Jesus diverse, Josephus, then he's like near thy■■■. Sing behind your dark hands the hold deep, O Lord, and on a message we will celebrate with love and fully fond.

[5 : 31] July 169, 2003.

Satsang with Mooji Now looking to God again for his help let's turn to the second passage which we read from his word the gospel as it's given to us by Luke and chapter 16 and we'll consider the

narrative which we read which is known as the parable of a rich man and Lazarus from verse 19 to 31 but we'll look at that parable in the light of verse 13 where Christ says this

No servant can serve two masters either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other you cannot serve both God and money especially those words you cannot serve both God and money and that's in connection with the parable of a rich man and Lazarus and as I mentioned this parable is connected with the one which we find at the beginning of the chapter which we saw this morning the parable of the unjust steward and both parables are connected by this theme the theme of wealth or money how we view it and what we do with it and the key words governing both parables are just these at the end of verse 13 that's the main lesson of both parables that we cannot serve both God and money and so Christ commands us to use our God-given resources wisely and in the first parable we saw something of what that meant we are to make sure first of all that we help the poor and needy people of God first of all we must ensure that we help them especially those ones that God places in our providence we are not to be tight-fisted as we read in Deuteronomy or hard-hearted but to open our hands to give to the needy and then again as we saw in the morning we are to be honest in all our financial dealings because the Lord reminds us that if we are dishonest in that kind of way then the true spiritual riches will not be given to us in other words an inheritance in heaven will not be ours if we are fundamentally dishonest in our dealings with one another now as I mentioned just at the close in the morning that parable offended the Pharisees and we are told in the passage in verse 14 here that the Pharisees who loved money heard all this and were sneering at Jesus now I am sure they probably recognized that the Lord was already exposing themselves because they claimed to be the children of the life and yet the Lord is telling them more or less that they are not walking as the children of light he knows their covetousness other people don't in fact other people looking at their wealth are saying well these are people of God they are obviously blessed but Christ knows their hearts he knows what's true about them and Luke here tells us that they were covetous and the Lord knew that and he shows them or he is beginning to show them how inconsistent their walk is with the real law of God in other words they were very selective in their obedience to God's law and they were very external in their obedience to the law if they could keep a law externally well that was sufficient for them as long as they could break it freely internally and they were very selective choosy in what parts they obey and the Lord constantly reminds them and there are several verses in this chapter too which reminds them of certain areas which they were constantly breaking of God's law but be that if it may they began to deride them and the Lord turned and then spoke this parable to them and it's addressed especially to the Pharisees of course it's there for us all but addressed especially to them

now I've called it a parable several times and most people call it a parable but the fact is that it's not a parable at all I'm sure most of you know what a parable is a parable the old definition is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning or in other words there are earthly things which correspond to spiritual realities in other words the Lord speaks about wheat lamps fish and all these things correspond to something spiritual but you notice that's not the case here in the story it is the heavenly realities themselves that come to the fore we have this man a rich man who lives a certain way and a poor man who lives a certain way they die and they go to heaven or to hell these aren't parabolic images of something else these are the real things themselves so in other words what we have here isn't a parable it's more really an illustrative example it's an illustrative example of real eternal truth this is how a man lived this is how two men lived this is how they died and this was the afterlife for them so that's really how we should understand it and when the Lord gives it and when we read it I hope we see it and hear it as one of the most vivid dramatic and powerful passages in the whole of the Bible and it's a shame you know whatever familiarity should breach contempt with respect to any part of the Bible but especially with parts such as this I know you know the story we all know the story but we do and hear it as though we didn't and listen to what the Lord is saying how searching how discriminating how profound the truth which Christ himself utters and remember it is Christ himself who speaks it now in each act of the drama here at the time falls the Lord makes a heavy use of contrast in fact many other parables do so does this illustrative example here I've probably been calling it parable but just bear in mind what I said this one too uses contrast there's a contrast between these two men in their life there's a vivid contrast in their death and there's a vivid contrast beyond death and at every stage we could say that there is a great gulf fixed

[13 : 44] I know we're told at the end that there's a great gulf fixed but there's a gulf all the time there's a gulf in our life there's a gulf in our death and there's a gulf in the afterlife now let's hear then what the Lord has to say and let's hear him speak to ourselves and as the curtain rises in the opening act there are two scenes brought before us and both scenes are set at the home of a very wealthy man first of all we're taken inside the house and inside there's a man who is rich he's given no name interestingly we'll see why in a moment he has no name or we've given no name but all that strikes us is just how rich how staggeringly rich this man is it appears first of all in his clothes we're told that he's clothed with two garments purple and fine linen now that was a well recognized symbol of wealth two garments the inner garment was fine linen now that was imported either from Egypt or from India and either way you paid a lot for that pure white linen and over it he wore purple now this purple was obtained from a shellfish extensive dye extracted from a shellfish it was the basic staple economic sustenance of the place called Tyre became wealthy on this dye purple dye now if you wore fine linen and purple over it you were important and you had a lot of money this man dressed like that every day he lived you could say like royalty and the food on his table carried the same message this man is wealthy extremely wealthy we were told that he ate really joyfully and with soul that's what the words actually mean he ate extravagantly heartily sumptuously as we had it in the older version he eats like that every single day now for most people to eat like that was once in a year perhaps or twice in a year but this man is so wealthy that he can do that every single day

I suppose there's the implication that he's for company although we're not told he's for company but the implication is there so he's very very wealthy and as they would normally do they would wipe their mouths with the bread they would use bread at the napkin and throw it to little dogs which would gather from the table the Lord refers to that remember when he speaks to the woman and says well the woman says it to him Christ is not right to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs and she says yes but even the little dogs eat what falls from the table and oh Lord bless her so he would give to the dog and it's a simple thing the Lord sketches it and leaves it there and suddenly will move outside to the gate of the dwelling and there's the poor man and just as the rich man's extravagance is on every side so is the poor man's poverty it just stares you in the face first of all in his clothes the rich man's clothes were something else well this man's clothes aren't actually mentioned at all all we're told of is that he was clothed essentially with his own ulcers he had a blanket of ulcerated sores because he laid there at his gate now I'll show in a moment this man was disabled and disabled people had a hard time a very hard time because you were useless you were practically useless so that meant you were useless couldn't move and he developed sores lying at the gate of this man and as for food well we're not told what he got or how much he got all we're told is that he wanted to eat even the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table in fact the way it's written implies that he didn't get them and whatever kept him going was someone else's kindness someone throwing him something or perhaps someone who came from the rich man's house remembering him and just throwing him something but he desired even the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table now the bible tells us that he was actually cast at this man's gate it says in verse 20 but at his gate was laid a beggar named

Lazarus now in greek the word is quite vivid it means to be cast there and there again you have the this is really where it's told is that he's disabled he didn't place himself there he was put there somebody only thought well here's a place where the guy's going to get help so they cast him tossed him aside at this gate and there he is and he's got nothing except the dogs which lick his sores now in all honesty I still don't know whether this is meant to be alleviating his distress or adding to it I'm sure some of you older people anyway would be familiar with the idea that there was healing in the dog's lick and it certainly might have a soothing effect that may be maybe it's there to show that the man got no kindness where he ought to have got it but he got some where he could least have expected to find it from the scavenging pariah dogs that roamed around the city maybe that's there it just highlights this but one thing for sure everybody looking on it would say well there's a damned condemned man look at him look at the man god has cursed there he is penniless no clothes to wear made a mess of his life possibly cursed even from birth even the dogs are licking his sores these unclean beasts are licking the sores but a contrast people would say between the man whom god has blessed from the inside and the man whom god has searched lying at the gate so that's people's estimation of them both and every single day lazarus is aware of entertainment inside the house he's aware of food he can smell it cooking and he's seeing people in and out and

feasting and celebration but he never gets anything gets nothing nothing at all except a name it's not interesting he's got a name and his name is significant we'll come to it later but just for now notice that he's got one because christ gave him one but he didn't give the rich man a name at all it's as though right from the beginning christ tells us who's really important to him in this narrative he appears god forsaken and god forgotten but he's not god actually remembers this man god knows lazarus and in spite of how it appears in spite of how it appears to the rich man and in spite of how it appears to the pharisees god cares for lazarus and god knows him by name it's the rich man who's the nobody he's got no name because the bible tells us that the lord knows them but are his and the lord knows the way of the righteous but he does not know the way of the wicked and their name is not here his name is not here because his name perishes and that scene ends to a quick sketch inside the home and a quick sketch outside it and the act closes now when the curtain rises again we've still got a contrast this time it's their death and you would almost guess with lazarus condition that it couldn't have taken all that long and vitally in the parable it's lazarus who dies first and we're just told that he dies there's no word of a burial because there wouldn't be one there's no funeral cortege there's no procession no fuss

no fanfare no notice the man just simply expires his skeletal frame collapses and he just gives way and he's gone for all we know the dogs that licked his sores were possibly the dogs which consumed his body there's a man that seemed as though God didn't care for him and that was evident in his life and it's also evident in his death nobody could spice it on his body nobody lovingly laid it up anywhere this is just plain beggar lazarus and he's as forgotten in death as he is in his life again behold the end of the wicked so he would say or the death of the wicked but then we're told that the rich man dies and the rich man has been wise in his use of money I'm quite sure about that maybe he hasn't made friends for himself as we thought in the morning who would receive him into everlasting dwellings but that doesn't mean that he didn't think about his money he provided for his funeral

[24 : 00] I'm sure you provide for your funeral as well you're all going to make absolutely sure that there's money set aside for your funeral well so did this rich man I will probably too he did that he had it thought out and of course his body would have been nicely spiced and there's a procession and if the friends are there at the funeral I'm sure they made tributes to how hospitable this man was remember our Lord told us that if we love people like yourselves there's no great credit to us and he says that we can make a feast and invite people like yourselves to the feast and that's no great credit to us as well he said if you expect us to be invited back in return and I'm sure they would say well what lovely feasts we had at this man's house what incredible parties we had remember the drinks this man used to serve and remember the food he used to serve up for us every single time we went what a great fellow this was what a great burial he had this burial is explicitly mentioned the rich man also died and he was buried he was buried and I'm quite sure he went to a beautiful tomb that was very ornate and again the contrast is staggering

Lazarus ruts the way for God and the rich man is given a great send off as a man of God should be behold again the death of the man whom the Lord has blessed or at least that's what it looks like and the curtain closes again normally curtains won't rise after this because that's the end that's all we know we see lives and we judge lives we can't help doing it if you knew me you would probably form a judgment of me and I would form a judgment of you we can't help doing that and we would do it with these men too and people would be making it but the curtain rises suddenly we're given an insight into another action of drama we're taken beyond death now if someone's going to take us beyond death I would like him to have some kind of authority if he's going to make a pronouncement about it now that's what our Lord does he glides effortlessly here from this life into the next he can talk about both as equally real to him because they are if you're going to be told what's beyond the veil it's best to have somebody beyond the veil tell you about it there's no point in the speculation of this man or that man what uses my speculation about what lies beyond the grave but the

Lord tells us as someone who has authority the only begotten son who came from the bosom of the father he has explained the father and he has explained the father's dwelling he comes to tell us about the life that is to come and he does that here and we're given quite simply a glimpse beyond the veil and what a terrible glimpse it actually is it's a terrible thing the same contrast is there and first we're led to Lazarus now it's an interesting thing about Lazarus because we can be quite sure but at last he had his procession we're told that the angels carried him when he died to Abraham's

side or literally Abraham's bosom now the last time Lazarus had an escort he dumped him at the rich man's gate but this time he's got a procession and it's the angels of God who carry his soul into paradise

Abraham's bosom was just a Jewish way of referring to paradise which was again a Jewish description of the heavenly state he was escorted there by the angels of God that burning chariot which came down to take Elijah and the burning chariot which came down to take Enoch we believe too is the same burning chariot which came down to take Pharaoh's the burning chariot an angelic chariot the burning ones that's who they are a seraphim or cherubim or whichever angels they are the burning ones burning in their holiness burning in their zeal and industry and in their service of God is it not the case that that's a chariot for everyone I believe there is I don't believe any soul goes unaccompanied into glory that God sends messengers and people to accompany and that's what happens to this man because that's it that if his body lies there apparently cursed and apparently forgotten the soul enters heaven with a fanfare accompanied by the very angels of God themselves now paradise as I said it's just a state of blessing after death

Abraham's bosom it's called and it would have been called that I suppose until Christ himself went there in the flesh after that we would call it Christ's own bosom but it's Abraham's bosom the father of the faithful the man chosen by God the friend of God well that's where this man's soul went but what does it convey what does the idea Abraham's bosom convey to you what's it meant to convey to us all well that's a couple of things first of all it conveys feasting because to lie in the bosom you think about it conveys feeding you remember how people used to eat at a table they used to recline and lie there they would lie there with one pretty much against the chest of the other with their legs stretched around in a semicircle remember at the last supper how Peter beckoned to John who we're told was leaning against Jesus bosom in other words in the order of the disciples

[30 : 11] John was just next to Christ now here by being in Abraham's bosom we're told that at last last of us he's at a feast he's at a feast and what's more he's in a fellowship because that's where Abraham's bosom is too it's the place where Abraham entertains and the place where Abraham himself is entertained now in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ isn't heaven a table isn't our final state the marriage supper of the land isn't heaven represented in terms of company and fellowship Lazarus had none of it none of it on earth I'm sure his soul longed for a lot of fellowship but he didn't get any or precious little probably but he's got it now he's got it he's with the people of God the Lord said to the Jews to the people with privileges he said to them people will come from north south east and west and will sit down with Abraham

Isaac and Jacob in my kingdom and you yourselves will be transferred these were solemn words you who expect to be there will be excluded others will come and they will take your place sitting down and eating with them what does that convey fellowship interchange and interaction I've often mentioned that some people have asked a question will we know one another in heaven which I find a very strange question why should we not how is it conceivable that we could be in heaven without knowing one another what kind of family is it that is dispersed to the four corners and then comes home only not to speak to each other or to recognize each other wouldn't that be remarkable surely the promise of sitting down with them is for them to know us and us to know them and in Christ Jesus to grow more and more in our knowledge of him and one another and in our praise surely that's the reason and this man has gone to do with company the kind of company you craved and longed for and sometimes you know we can be lonely as Christians for a variety of reasons we can be lonely but the Lord will see to it that we're never alone and the time will come when we're crowded with company the best of company the finest fellowship because the Lord Jesus Christ himself will be at the table and the thing is of course there's a contrast here not just between Lazarus and the rich man but between Lazarus now and Lazarus then for example was he rich no he was true but what did he know well he is heir of God heir of God all God has to give it all belongs now to Lazarus his promises his provisions he's got it all clothed he was clothed with sores then no well listen to what revelation says I beheld a multitude which no man could number and they were clothed in white robes now there you have the fine white linen robes of the book of the revelation at last he's got them he's got them that God given they represent his holiness and his purity the best of everything his clothes food yes he longed for crumbs then but now he's got it all served to him by the head of the table himself comforted yes the only comfort if it was a comfort and I tend to think that somehow it was the only comfort was the tongue of a dog but now

Abraham tells us Lazarus is comforted here and you are tormented there he is as happy as any man could possibly be change of scene and a change of place we've crossed a chasm and to the other side the rich man he was escorted too before the funeral procession took him to his grave he had already been escorted in soul to a place that is bleak and desolate we're told that he lifted up his eyes in hell in other words he was buried before he was buried his soul was buried before his body was buried and when people were extolling what a wonderful Christian he was there he was in hell and here he lifts up his eyes because the natural position in hell is for the eyes to be down and not to be up and he's given to see

Abraham and to see Lazarus now what a shock to this man it was to be there it was a shock he was a Jew and he didn't expect to be there this is addressed to the Pharisees and do they know it oh yes they know it and this man didn't expect to be in hell but that is where he opened his eyes you all know what it's like to dream and to wake up sometimes sad but it was only a dream and sometimes you wake up glad that it was only a dream well this man woke up and he faced the truth or the reality of his worst nightmare he opened his eyes in hell that's what happened to this man that's what happened and it happens to people it happens to people and you can get distracted into all kinds of questions about who they are or how many there are but it happens to people and it happens to people who thought they would be in hell that's a very solemn thing that's very profound and this man is of that number if he rich now no the bible tells us that we took nothing into this world and it is certain it will take nothing out with us and he's got nothing out not a thing is he clothed well the only clothing that we can say that he has of any meaning is just a garment of fire whatever that may be there's no clothes drawn attention to if anything his own body will be more like Lazarus was before

[37 : 12] Lazarus went to glory is he fed no he asks for a little water to cool his tongue is he comfortable no as Abraham says Lazarus is comforted but you in agony it says here but you are tormented and what does that mean well you know how could I say that there have been lots of graphic attempts made to try and explain what this place is like who knows who can say who can say and I could never work up in you a desire to be saved by trying to make this as graphic as possible could I I'd have no guarantee of being faithful to the word of God anyway the word of God uses images it describes it as fire it describes it as a torment it describes it as a worm that refuses to die it describes it as outer darkness symbols and these are all symbols and simple it's a big oh yes these are all symbols as

God has all find symbols of what is it a symbol of a holiday is it a symbol of something that's pleasant is it a symbol of something that's desirable no that is the point and it's not necessary for me to try to describe or even to think for myself or for you what it actually consists if you know anything of what it means to be sad or unhappy or in pain then that's enough suppose it I said this recently in my own congregation I get terrible migraine headaches if I was to have one of them forever more that would be more than enough more than enough you've had two things and I said to you in the middle of your toothache you're never going to get rid of this what would that mean have you ever been depressed if I said to you you will never come out of this depression is that not enough do I have to speak about things like ovens that people have spoken about in the past something to work up that fear in you no just take it as it is from the Lord there is a stake of discontent and of torment into which we go if we go unrepentant before God and leave it like that and deal with it like that because friend it means be you it means be you God in all sincerity offers you the gospel message and offers you to come to Christ not just once or twice but for all I know a thousand times he's called upon you can do this a thousand times and he's born with you so patiently so so patiently and he still does and he's offering you this because you remember and let me remember it too that if ever I find myself there it's because I've chosen it if ever I find myself without God it's because I've said no thanks to God all my life that's why that's why C.S. Lewis once said very profoundly that the gate of hell was locked on the inside before it is locked on the outside it is simply choosing for ourselves a godless existence and then that becomes confirmed in other words the Lord has to do nothing only to withdraw himself and God assures us that if we constantly say

I don't want you then he will leave us alone the only problem is that once you really discover what that is you wish you had never chosen but there it is if we choose it then we choose it and in spite of this man's pleading you'll notice that there is a great gulf fixed so that it is impossible for anyone to cross from the one side to the other the thing is that in his lifetime the gulf from his table to his gate

wasn't all that big was it what did it have really cost him just to come out even now and again and hear Lazarus have some of this but he didn't bother that was too big a gulf couldn't cross that far to help him and now he wants Lazarus to cross this chasm just to give him some kind of relief well the first bridge he put across but this one can't be crossed it's it's a chasm the last chasm it's a yawning chasm it is as wide as the unchanging justice of

God and it just can't he got across nothing can undo what is now finally done and no amount of remorse is ever going to build a bridge never going to do it no amount of if only is going to build a bridge back there because lots of things may happen in a lost eternity there may be lots of feelings but repentance just isn't one of them and you'll notice that this man still doesn't repent does he he doesn't change nothing's changed his language is still the same but I want to leave that and just come to it in a minute there's so many signs that this man hasn't changed and lost eternity at all but I want to ask the big question why was Lazarus saved and why was the rich man lost and that's the big question isn't it why was Lazarus saved and why was the rich man lost why was

[43 : 22] Lazarus saved well the liberation theologian will tell you because he was poor well of course he wasn't saved because he was poor and interestingly he went to the bosom of someone who was extremely rich Abraham was a very very rich man this man wasn't saved because he was poor the answer lies in his name Christ gave him one and his name was Lazarus which means interestingly God is my heaven wasn't here he looks great and I start for