

The Warnings Of The Rich Man

There is a story told by Jesus in Luke 16. This story is about a rich man and Lazarus. They lived very different lives while they were on the earth. The rich man was "*clothed in purple and fine linen and fare sumptuously every day,*" but as for Lazarus he was "*full of sores*" and was "*desiring to be fed.*" This is one of the strongest contrasts between people that the scriptures teach. One man had everything that he needed and beyond. One man had almost nothing, and had to suffer from the sores on his body. The fate that must happen to us all happened to both of these men. Hebrews 9:27 says that "*it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.*" We all have an appointment with death that we cannot escape. These two men had come to the time of their appointments. Vss. 27-28 reads, "*The he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them.'*" There is much we can learn from the rich man and Lazarus, but I want to focus on what the rich man wanted Lazarus to come and warn his brothers of.

Vs. 20 says that Lazarus "*was laid at the rich man's gate*" and we never see any sign of the rich man using any of his wealth for Lazarus. It wasn't like the situations we have today where we have one opportunity to help someone and then pass it up. He had repeated opportunities and the scriptures never tell us that he lifted even a finger to help this poor and sick man. His message from torment could be this: "Use your riches for the good of others." Do you think that he regretted not helping others with the riches that he was unable to take with him? He had an opportunity to help Lazarus multiple times, but he shunned the command of God. How shameful it is that in all his riches, he never helped the poor, sick man that was just at his gates.

The next message that Lazarus could tell is a common one. Paul spoke to Timothy about this in 1 Timothy 6, and Solomon instructed us about this in Ecclesiastes. The lesson is this: "No matter how many riches you obtain, they will never buy a relationship with God. Therefore don't let your riches replace a relationship with God." How much evidence do we need to convince ourselves of the truth of the scriptures? Again and again we have God telling us that these things are of no value if they are not used for His glory and the betterment of others. If riches could buy a relationship with God, then Solomon certainly could have done it. Yet, he learned the vanity of riches and realized that man's responsibility was to "*Fear God and keep His*

commandments.” If you were one of this rich man’s brothers, what would you say to the testimony of Lazarus?

Another message that the rich man could tell us from Luke 16 is this: “Once you die, you have no more riches or chances to change your eternal abode.” Paul truly said in 1 Timothy 6:7, “*For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*” We must not let the truth of the scriptures become redundant to us, so that we turn our ear away. We must realize that we will be judged according to our works on this earth. At the point where the rich man was at, there were no more chances. He had lived his life the way he chose, he died and then received his reward. The reward for not laying up treasures in Heaven is to have all your treasures destroyed and to suffer for an eternity because God wasn’t worth enough to you. You weren’t mindful of the important things in your life. Can we say that God is unjust, if we, in our selfishness, despise everything that our gracious Lord provides for us? We deserve exactly what we get when we choose not to follow our loving and gracious Savior.

The last message from the rich man could be this: “This is the most terrible place I have ever been, I want just a little water to cool my tongue, but there was no relief for me. This is the worst place I have ever known, I don’t want people to make the same mistakes I did. There is nowhere else to go, and this pain is unbearable, *please don’t come to this place!*” How much more do we have to hear? This man is an everlasting testimony to the truth of the scriptures, “*For the wages of sin is death.*” So many times we fail to learn from the examples of others. This man is an example of what we should never do. What will you do with the truth of the scriptures? One of the final statements that the rich man makes is in verse 30: “*And he said, ‘No father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’”* What if Lazarus brought these warnings to us? What if he rose from the dead and came to your door to say to you, “I have a warning from your brother who is in Torment.” What if you heard the terrible things that have happened to your brother, and the pleas he has for you and for your family? Would you repent if Lazarus told you these things? Jesus has told us the truth, and He has made a way for us to come to an everlasting abode with Him. He was raised from the dead according to the scriptures, and He has shown us so very clearly what dying without Him is like. The question truly is this: “What will you do with Jesus?”

Shane Millard