

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 21: Money, and the Rich Man and Lazarus -- Luke 16:1-31

A manager has just been caught. The books do not add up, his master has heard the reports, and his employment is over. In a single conversation his comfortable world collapses. He is too soft for manual labor and too proud to beg, and so, with the clock running, he does something clever. Before the news spreads, he calls in his master's debtors and slashes their bills, buying himself friends who will take him in once the paycheck stops. Jesus tells this odd little story, and then says something that startles us still: the master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. Jesus is not praising the man's dishonesty. He is holding up a mirror, asking why the people of this world are so often more strategic about money than the people of God are about eternity.

Luke 16 is a chapter about money, and it does not flatter us. Jesus moves from the parable of the shrewd manager to a series of piercing sayings: be faithful in little if you want to be trusted with much, you cannot serve God and money, what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. The Pharisees, Luke tells us plainly, were lovers of money, and they ridiculed Him for all this. It is easy to imagine. Few subjects expose the human heart like our wallets. We can sing about surrender on Sunday and still grip our possessions with white knuckles the rest of the week. Jesus will not let us pretend the two loyalties can coexist.

Then the chapter turns a corner, and the air grows still. Jesus tells of a rich man who feasted every day and a beggar named Lazarus who lay at his gate, longing for the scraps. Both men die. And the camera, which had lingered on linen and banquets, now follows them past the grave, into a place of comfort and a place of torment, separated by a great chasm that no one can cross. This is one of the most sobering scenes in all of Scripture, and we should not rush past it. Jesus pulls back the curtain on the reality that waits beyond death, where the choices and the loves of this life are revealed for what they truly were.

Read this chapter slowly, and let it press on you where it means to. Money is not neutral; it is a master that competes with God for our hearts, or a tool we can use faithfully for His kingdom. And the way we live now, what we treasure, whom we notice at our gate, whether we listen to God's word while we still can, reaches past the grave into a destiny that does not change. Jesus tells us all of this not to frighten us into despair but to call us home while there is still time. The most urgent question in Luke 16 is not what we will do with our money someday, but what we will do with God's voice today.

Group Discussion: Jesus says flatly, "You cannot serve God and money" (v. 13), naming wealth as a rival master rather than a neutral tool. In a culture that constantly tells us our security and worth are tied to what we own, why is it so easy to drift into serving money without ever

consciously deciding to? Where do you see this pull most strongly in your own season of life, and what would it look like for a group of believers to help one another resist it?

Personal Reflection: The rich man saw Lazarus at his gate every day and did nothing, not out of cruelty so much as comfortable blindness. Who is the Lazarus at your gate, the person or need that God keeps placing in your line of sight that you have learned to walk past? What is one honest reason you have not responded, and what would it cost you to truly see that person this week?

Read Luke 16:1–31

Study Questions

1. In the parable of the dishonest manager, the master “commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness” (v. 8), and Jesus draws the lesson, “make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings” (v. 9). What is Jesus actually teaching here about the right use of worldly wealth, and what is He clearly not teaching?
2. Jesus says, “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much” (v. 10). Where is God currently testing your faithfulness in some small or hidden matter of money, time, or trust, and what does your handling of that little thing reveal about your readiness to be trusted with more?
3. Jesus declares, “No servant can serve two masters... You cannot serve God and money” (v. 13). Why does Jesus frame money as a master and a rival to God rather than simply a possession, and what does it mean to have God, rather than wealth, on the throne of a life?
4. Luke tells us “the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him” (v. 14). When God’s word presses on an area of your life you would rather protect, how do you tend to respond, and where might you be quietly ridiculing or dismissing a teaching of Jesus because it touches something you love?
5. Jesus says, “The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached” (v. 16), and adds that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to fail (v. 17). What is Jesus teaching about the place of the Old Law, the arrival of the kingdom, and the abiding authority of God’s word in this new era?
6. The rich man “was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day” while Lazarus lay at his gate “desiring to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table” (vv. 19–21). When you picture your own daily life of comfort and routine, who are the people just outside your gate, and what keeps you from noticing them?
7. Jesus says God “knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God” (v. 15). How does this verse expose the difference between an outward reputation for righteousness and the actual condition of the heart, and why can we not hide behind appearances with God?

8. Both Lazarus and the rich man die, and their circumstances are completely reversed (vv. 22–23). Knowing that the comforts and hardships of this life will one day be turned over and weighed in light of eternity, what in your present life are you tempted to envy or to cling to that will not matter then, and how should that change the way you live now?
9. When the rich man dies, he is “in torment” in Hades and lifts up his eyes, while Lazarus is “carried by the angels to Abraham’s side”; between them “a great chasm has been fixed” (vv. 22–26), and Abraham finally says, “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them” (v. 29). What does this passage teach about conscious existence after death, the fixed and final destinies of the saved and the lost, and the sufficiency of God’s word to lead us to repentance now?
10. Look back across the whole chapter, from the shrewd manager to the rich man’s final, desperate plea. Jesus has confronted us with our money, our blindness to those in need, and the unchanging eternity that follows this life. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through Luke 16. What is the single truth from this passage that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Luke 12:13–21, the rich fool who stored up treasure for himself but was not rich toward God; 1 Timothy 6:6–19, the love of money as a root of evils and the charge to the rich to be generous and rich in good works; Hebrews 9:27, it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment; 2 Corinthians 5:10, all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ; Matthew 25:31–46, the King who separates the sheep from the goats by how they treated the least of these.