

LAZARUS, THE POOR MAN (LUKE 16)

We have two stories involving a man named Lazarus from **Luke 16** and **John 11**, of which we will look at **Luke 16** today and, Lord willing, **John 11** next week. The Lazarus in **Luke 16** is in a parable that Jesus gave to His disciples. Whether it was a true account, which is possible, we don't know. But it is a story of a poor man, a very poor man who suffered greatly in his time on this earth, yet kept his faith in God as his Savior/Redeemer, of which he then was described by Jesus as being in the bosom of Abraham, a place where the redeemed would be until the physical resurrection of the saints, that was its description, prior to the revelation of Christ Jesus. That is also then prior to what the Apostle John tells us, "Beloved, now WE are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (**1 John 3:2**) Then as the Apostle Paul encourages us with these words, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God [those who have believed on Christ and received Him-**John 1:12-13**], and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we **suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together**. Regarding Abraham, Abraham "believed in the Lord, and He [God] accounted it to him for righteousness." (**Genesis 15:6**) That same faith in God that Abraham had, so do we, believing in the Word of God and His promises. It is then said then that Abraham is the father of our faith. The other Lazarus, we know a little bit more about him in a more personal way, as we are told the story of Jesus raising of Lazarus from the dead. In **John 11:19** it is said that Lazarus was the brother of Martha and Mary. He was a real human being that lived at the time of Christ. Jesus knew him and it was said by the sisters, in a message they had sent to him, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." (**John 11:3**) We will look at that story next week though, as it is the telling of the miracle of Christ Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

Now it is upon us, in this present time, to believe on the Lord Christ Jesus as being God's intended sacrifice for our sins, as He took our sins against God, upon Himself, to the cross, the grave, and then rose from the grave on the third day conquering death, sin and evil so that we too can overcome the same! It is then up to us to believe on the Lord Christ Jesus, as HE IS our Redeemer and that He does indeed live! The Apostle Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the **power of God to salvation** for everyone who **believes**, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." (**Romans 1:16**) To those who have their doubts, hopefully it is in you, as it was with the man who came to Jesus to deliver his son from an unclean spirit. "Jesus said to him, **"If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."** Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; **help my unbelief!**" When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, **"Deaf and dumb spirit, I**

command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" (Mark 9:23-25) Jesus **honored** that man's **honesty**! [root honos=honor] As we looked at last week, we all start out blind and ignorant. In the Old Testament, after Joshua had led the Israelites into Canaan land, just before he was to die, he told them, "Now therefore, fear the Lord, **serve Him in sincerity and in truth**, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. **Serve the Lord!**" (Joshua 24:14) Jesus, when He was ministering to the Samaritan woman at the well said this, "**God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.**" (John 4:24) That is only possible if we believe on Christ Jesus and receive Him by being born-again!]

Last week we looked at the blind man that Jesus healed, in **John 9**. In conclusion we are, like that blind man, spiritually speaking, all born blind and ignorant. Then, as was with the two Lazarus's that we'll read about, we all begin our journey on this earth poor and dead, spiritually speaking. Therefore, 1. "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God [to those who believe], being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit." (1 Peter 3:18) "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:11) Prior to the bulk of the prophecies of Christ Jesus found in **Isaiah** and in the **Psalms**, in the Old Testament, those of whom God had called, He had revealed to them that **He** was their Salvation, their Redeemer, that theirs/our time on this earth is just the beginning. Job, who is presumed to have lived in the time of the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had said, even in the midst of His suffering, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God." (Job 19:25-26) He is speaking of the resurrection, our resurrection! I'll attempt to match up those two accounts of Lazarus, in context, to once again see how the Word of God complements, helps to complete and make whole, the Word of God, just as we see the Old Testament complementing the New Testament and vice-versa. Now, for the parable of Lazarus in **Luke 16**, regarding context, we'll read all of **Luke 16**.

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[**Luke 16:1-13 (The Parable of the Unjust Steward)**] He also said to His disciples: "**There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'** Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.' So he called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' So he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write

fifty.' Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' So he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light. And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. [do you intend to fail in Christ? You won't, IF you put your wholehearted trust in Him. (**Proverbs 3:5-6**) Nevertheless, even if we aren't concerned about being booted out of the church into this cruel, dark world, we obviously have many among us and around us who won't treat us according to the Golden Rule, or "Royal law" as the Apostle James calls it, but WE, those who have believed on Christ and have received Him, are told, by Christ Himself, to love even our enemies (**Matthew 5:44**). Really, as the Apostle Paul tells us in his love chapter, love hopes all things and believes all things. (**1 Corinthians 13:7**) We are then hoping and believing that we will all make it unto eternal life in Christ, as we treat others then accordingly. Then Jesus continued by saying:] **He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?** [There is our message on giving right there. As it is all God's and we are His, how will we manage what He has blessed us with and entrusted to us?] **And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's [or God's], who will give you what is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.**" [Likewise, the Apostle James said that a double-minded person is unstable in all of his ways (**James 1:8**)]

[**Luke 16:14-18 (The Law, the Prophets, and the Kingdom)**] Now the Pharisees, who were **lovers of money**, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. And He said to them, "**You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts.** For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail. **Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.**" [Jesus always knew what was in other people's hearts, as we can of that time and again. The same goes for God knowing what is in our hearts. The best that we can do is go to Him in honesty and ask that He will change our hearts and renew our minds to have a pure heart and a clear conscience with God and before others. Before we get to the rich man and Lazarus parable, to continue in context to what Jesus had taught, He also had said, "**Not everyone who says to**

Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but **he who does the will of My Father in heaven**. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many **wonders** in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:21-23) That word wonders is the Greek word "dynamis" or "dunamis" of which means miracles. It is the same word used in Romans 1:16 that I mentioned earlier and it is in what Paul said in Philippians 3:9-11, that he may "be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that **I may know Him and the power of His resurrection**, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead." The circumstances in our lives are inconsequential to our knowing Him AND the power of His resurrection, of which becomes for us a concern and desire not only for ourselves, but for others.

[The Rich Man and Lazarus]

"There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' Then 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, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.' "

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In Jesus "Sermon on the Mount" He said, ""Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they

shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:3-10) After Jesus had risen from the dead, in what we call Jesus' "Great Commission", he said to his disciples, **"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."** (Matthew 28:18-20)

So, the backdrop of this story is that it is towards the end of Jesus' ministry and by then, as He had said in responding to John the Baptist's disciples inquiring of whether He was the Christ, Jesus said, **"The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."** (Luke 7:22-23) The poor have the gospel preached to them, really has a double meaning. The poor in spirit and also those who are not those who are not the double-minded trying to serve God and money. Therefore Jesus' fame and notoriety by then had spread throughout Judea/Palestine. Just prior to Jesus' death and then resurrection, He said to His disciples, **"These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father."** His disciples said to Him, **"See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech! Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God."** Jesus answered them, **"Do you now believe? Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."** (John 16:25-33) We are not called to conquer the world, build our own kingdom on earth, or to overcome in our own power. In Christ alone we WILL overcome, in Christ alone we can have the peace of God and assurance of our place in His eternal kingdom as God is presently building His eternal kingdom for His glory, honor and praise. Lord, we believe, help our unbelief!