

## *Seeing Lazarus*

Luke 16:19-31 (September 25, 2022)

### ***Luke 16: 19-31***

<sup>19</sup>“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. <sup>20</sup>And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, <sup>21</sup>who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. <sup>22</sup>The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup>In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. <sup>24</sup>He called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.’ <sup>25</sup>But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. <sup>26</sup>Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’ <sup>27</sup>He said, ‘Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house— <sup>28</sup>for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.’ <sup>29</sup>Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’ <sup>30</sup>He said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ <sup>31</sup>He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

### ***Historical Context***

Unlike other parables, this one does not stay in the realm of first-century village life. It spans this life and the next. It is realistic in its portrayal of the vast gap between rich and poor. The phenomenon of the poor waiting for crumbs at the doors of the rich is a detail taken straight from first-century life. It is strange in that the reversal of fortunes it depicts contradicts the widespread belief that wealth was a sign of God's favor and poverty a sign of sin. The story reflects the ancient belief that the righteous and the wicked can see each other after death.

### ***Theme: Seeing Lazarus***

The sin of the rich man begins here: He did not see Lazarus. Or at least he did not see him as more than an extension of himself and his own needs --- particularly at the end. For if he had seen him for all that he was: once an infant and a boy, a brother, a husband, a father, a grandfather. If he had seen him as one with hopes and hurts, dreams and disappointments. If he had seen him as one beloved by God, then perhaps this story would have ended differently.

Only it appears that though their paths crossed --- perhaps as much as every day or more --- the rich man never even saw him at all.

Too, too often, others are simply invisible to us. As Lazarus was to the rich man --- and no doubt to countless others --- as he sat and begged at the gate. The name "Lazarus" actually means "God is my help." And without a doubt, in the end God was the only help Lazarus had.

Only the parable is meant to speak to us the truth that this is not how it is meant to be. Jesus teaches today that all of our lives are caught up with one another in ways that have consequences now and consequences into eternity. And if I see. If I truly see the other? Perhaps that can be the start of living in a way that acknowledges the truth that we all belong to one another.