

# Sermon Notes, Luke 16:19-31, Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August 2026

## Introduction

We live in a world that loves money. If someone is described as being “better off” we assume it means they have more money. Assumed that if you have more money, you will be more comfortable, and if you have less you’ll be less. Easy to get swept along with that. A pay rise is automatically a good thing.

That was true in Jesus’ day as well.

As Jesus addresses this, we mustn’t mishear him. Money is not bad. Some of us know how painful it is not to have enough to live off; the rest of us have no idea how painful that is. Jesus doesn’t belittle that. In fact, if that’s you, what Jesus has to say today is wonderful. Indeed money opens doors for you. Proverbs 19:6; 10:15.

Jesus speaks into a world that just assumes that money is good, and the more of it the better.

Who’s he talking to? Look at the context. 16:1 – told his disciples a parable, which ends like this (16:13). Then this: 16:14-15. Still talking to the Pharisees when he gets to our parable, and only in 17:1 does he turn back to teach his disciples.

We only need to know two things about the Pharisees at this point: They loved money, and they’re looking to prove that things are OK with God. So the idea that you have to choose between living for money and living for God is not good. It cuts across their love of money, and it says that they’re not OK with God if they do.

So Jesus tells a story. To see what Jesus is saying, we’ll meet the two main characters, who had two very different futures. Then we’ll look at the two requests made by the rich man.

## The rich man

Exceedingly rich. Clothing – white linen and purple clothes very costly. Ate like a king – state banquet every day. Had a gate – not a rusty one that needs painting regularly, but a massive entrance with pillars, a roof and grand steps.

Many people read this and think his problem was that he was rich. The problem was the whole of verses 19-21. God told the people many times to look after the poor among them. Indeed the poor would come to the city gate to get the help and justice they needed. This rich man had to step over Lazarus every time he came and went. And did nothing to help.

The problem was not that he was rich, but that he had no time for God. His money mattered to him, but God did not.

## Lazarus

Complete contrast. The first man was rich, he was a beggar. The rich man was clothed in amazing outfits, this one was covered in open wounds. The rich man ate sumptuously, the poor man longed to be allowed to rifle through the bins.

He wasn’t “laid” at the rich man’s gate. Jesus more says he was “chucked” there. He was on the rubbish heap. And the dogs weren’t licking him better. These were

not pets; they were the town strays, drawn by the smells and taste of Lazarus' ulcers.

It's a big contrast, and it looks like the rich man has it better in every way. Not quite. Lazarus is the only person in any of Jesus' parables to have a name. His name means "God helps". The rich man wasn't on his side. It sounds like nobody cared. But God was on his side, and God would be his helper.

## **Two futures**

They both die. The beggar is carried to Abraham's side. The Jews of Jesus' day thought of heaven as like a wonderful banquet. They got this from the Old Testament. All the greats from the Old Testament would be there – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jesus told parables that pictured this great feast. So where's Lazarus now? He found the seating plan of his dreams. He's next to Abraham.

How about the rich man. He died and was buried. That's something. It was awful to be left unburied. We don't hear that about the earthly body of Lazarus. But that's all the good that can be said. He's in Hades, the place where people destined for hell and eternal punishment would go to wait for judgement day.

Just in passing: People say that death is the great equaliser. You may be rich in this life or poor, but everyone ends up in the same place. Jesus would not agree. There's just as much inequality in the next life as there is in this life. There are just lots of surprises when it comes to who gets what in the age to come.

From his place in Hades, the rich man can see Lazarus and Abraham in the distance, and he has two requests for Abraham.

## **Request 1: Ease my agony**

Verses 24-26. He still thinks Lazarus might be his servant. Two reasons why the answer is no.

This is justice. Verse 25. It's not that each person has a fixed amount of good things, and the rich man has used his up. It's not that the poorer you are in this life, the richer you'll be in the next. Abraham was wealthy when he died. We'll find out in a moment why the rich man ended up in torment, but we've already seen it's not because he was rich. It was because he had no time for God.

Those God calls will go and be with him and his people. Those who have rejected God will be in torment. The point is that in eternity, the realities are scaled up and they last forever. Lazarus sits next to Abraham in the heavenly banquet. That is way better than the feasts the rich man enjoyed. The rich man's torment was such that a damp finger on his tongue would be bliss. That's way worse than anything Lazarus suffered as a beggar.

And these futures are forever. Verse 26. The rich man doesn't even ask if he can join them. He just asks for Lazarus to bring a little temporary relief. That can't be done. It's not possible. So there's absolutely no way anybody can change places.

When Lazarus was at his gate, there was a gap between them, but a small one. Now there's a great chasm that cannot be bridged. The rich man's torment is forever. Lazarus' joy and comfort is forever.

We think those with more money are better off, and those with less money are less well off. The reality is that we're talking about a tiny little bit better off, for maybe 80 years. That's nothing compared to an eternity in the best life imaginable, against an eternity in the worst torment imaginable.

Having a bit more money, and the benefits that gives you in this life, is nothing. One thing matters: Do you know Jesus? Because the consequences of that are vast, and they last forever.

## **Request 2: Save my family**

His second request: Verses 27-28. It's too late for me, but perhaps it's not too late for my 5 brothers.

Request refused: Verse 29. They already have all they need to make the right decision. They have the Bible. Listen to that.

The man knows that won't be enough to bring them to repent, to change their priorities and to follow God rather than money. So he tries again. Verse 30.

Again he is refused. Verse 31. The problem is not lack of evidence. They have plenty, and more won't convince them.

At this point, Jesus steps out of his parable. He will rise from the dead, and the Pharisees will try to cover that up rather than start to follow him.

Here's the point: This is where we find the Pharisees in the story. They're the 5 brothers. It's not too late for them.

It's also where we fit into the story. We're the 5 brothers. It's not too late for us.

The man longs to speak from beyond the grave to warn his brothers but is denied.

Here's what we need to do, to avoid an eternity in torment, and to receive the most wonderful eternity with God and his people. Don't wait for more evidence that Jesus is real. Our problem is not lack of evidence. Jesus says to us: If you don't respond to me with the evidence you have, you'll always find another excuse.

The evidence we need is in the Bible. Read it. "Listen to that," Jesus says. Then we'll be convinced and we'll repent. We'll turn from living for money, for comfort, for pleasure or for leisure, and turn to live for God. We'll start to treat other people the way God wants us to treat them, including the most needy amongst us.

And we'll find that those who follow Jesus are in store for a future that is more amazing than anything we've ever dreamed of. That future is a pure gift from Jesus. And it goes on forever.