Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

A Testimony of One Surprised to Be in Hell, Part 1
Scripture: Luke 16:19-31
Code: 42-212

We come now to the study of the Word of God, and it's the 16th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, Luke chapter 16. This is one of the sections in the Gospel of Luke that is unique to Luke and very, very powerful. It is a story that Jesus told that is indelible and unforgettable and well-known to students of the Bible. It is the story of the rich man and Lazarus.

There would be a lot of ways to title this section, Luke 16:19 to 31. Could be called "The Great Reversal." It could be called, "A Reluctant Witness From Hell." Could be called, "How to Think You're Going to Heaven and End Up In Hell." There are many titles, and you'll think of even more when we look at this powerful passage.

Most people, certainly most people in the Western world who've had any exposure to Christianity whatsoever, think they're going to Heaven; and that is largely affirmed by clergymen and religious leaders. Ninety percent of Americans believe in God; 85 percent say they believe in Jesus. Certainly, these people all think they're headed for Heaven. I'm quite sure that hell is populated mostly with people who are shocked to find themselves there. People typically answer the question, "Are you going to Heaven?" with, "Well, I'm a good person. I'm a religious person. I believe in God. I believe in Jesus. I'm going to Heaven. God certainly wouldn't send me to hell."

Hell is full of surprised people. That's really what this story is about — a man who was shocked to find himself in hell. Equally shocking to those who listen to the story was the idea that the other man was in Heaven. This was contrary to all of their expectations...

As we think about this story, I wanna begin by thinking about something on a broader level. One of the common graces that God gives us is hope. Hope. It is, I say, a common grace, because it is basically common to everybody, whether you're a Christian or non-Christian, you live with a measure of hope. It is a...it is a gift to all of created humanity. It is a way to cope. It is a necessary faculty that we have to mitigate our pain and our suffering and our sorrow, 'cause life is filled with disappointments. All kinds from maybe the trivial kind of disappointments to the most profound and painful. Life is filled with unfulfilled ambitions, desires that never are materialized or realized; relationships that are full of love and joy and all of a sudden explode in pain and sorrow and bitterness.

There are events that do not turn out the way we want them to turn out, and this is life. And through the pain of those moments in life, through the agonizing anxiety and pressure and fear and worry that is produced by those kinds of things, people look to the future. They set their heart on something better to come, a new path, a new person in their life, a...a fresh opportunity, a...a better hope that anything, perhaps they had hoped for in the past. There's some resilience in the human heart, and this is a common grace. This is a gift of God to make life livable. Life in this world is very difficult. We live in a fallen world, a sinful world. We are sinful people in this world. Everything around us is dying. Sin dominates our world. It dominates our life, and death is inevitable for everyone, and we experience it and experience it again and again and again in the people around us who die. Life can be very, very difficult. Our relationships explode. Our best dreams never are realized.

This is life; and, were it not for hope, we would not be able to find our way beyond the moment's pain; and so God has given us a gift of common grace, just in general to humanity. Even the Book of Proverbs says, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." Where there is no hope, there is a kind of profound, inescapable misery. The Bible even says this, "If in this world only you have hope, you are of all men most miserable." Whatever ever point your hope runs out, your misery begins in its most profound sense. People survive the tragedies of life, the sufferings of life, the unexpected disappointments of life, the agonizing promise of life, by hoping for a better future, a better job than the one they had hoped for, a better career than the one they had planned for, a better relationship than the one that just exploded, a...a better cure than the one they just tried for their illness.

To live life without this hope would make life excruciating...and really unbearable. But what if...what if everything in your life was as bad as it could be. Take everything bad that has ever happened in your life, roll it all into one experience, and make it permanent. All the pain, all the disappointment, all the failure...all the hatred, all the bitterness, all the fear, all the anxiety...and experience that to the full, and then add this: there's no hope. It cannot, it will not ever get better. That knowledge...would compound and exacerbate your suffering exponentially, incalculably. If you were in the severest torture and the most profound and relentless torment in all the realms of human faculty, physical and mental...and spiritual and emotional, and you were suffering in all those realms at the same time and knew there would never be one moment of relief, nothing will ever change...forever, the suffering would be inexpressible. I just described hell. It is the place of the most profound suffering, compounded infinitely by the realization that it lasts forever, and nothing will ever change.

Here is the story of a man who went to that place. Let's read the story. Verse 19, "Now there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen...gaily living in splendor every day. And a certain poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table. Besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now it came about that the poor man died, and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's side. And the rich man also died, and was buried. And in Hades or hell, he lifted up his eyes, being in torment...and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out

and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child or son, remember that during your life, you received your good things; and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us. And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may warn them lest they also come to this place of torment.' And Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' But he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.'"

This story is about a rich man. He's the main character. He's a religious man. He would be understood in the context of this story, as Jesus is telling it, to be a man who had been blessed by God. They had their own sort of prosperity religion in those days, and...and they saw the poor people as cursed and the rich people as blessed. That's the view of the Pharisees, the religious leaders of Israel. So this is a man who has been singularly blessed by God. He is a man who lives life to the max, who enjoys the best that life can bring limitlessly, who surely expects to go to Heaven but ends up in hell. And then there is that other man, that despicable, poor man...who, by very evidence of his life is being cursed by God who ends up when he dies in Heaven. That's why you could call this story "The Great Reversal."

And just exactly to whom is this story directed? Well, it is directed, first of all, at the moment, at the time to the Pharisees again, verse 14. "The Pharisees who were lovers of money were listening to all these things; and He said to them." This section is a section of Jesus speaking to the Pharisees; 17:1, he turns to speak to His disciples. So for the moment, this story is directed at the Pharisees, as have been a number of our Lord's stories, including the amazing three stories He told in the 15th chapter about the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the tale of two sons. In fact, the Pharisees are the ones who have declared their loyalty to the law and the prophets referred to in verse 16. They had declared their adherence to and obedience to Moses and the prophets. They were the religious leaders of Israel. They were the ones who considered themselves blessed and, according to verse 14, they were lovers of money. They had a convenient theology that accommodated their wealth prosperity view. The more money you had, the more you were blessed by God. Loving money, pursuing money is like loving God and pursuing blessing. That was their view. The truth is, verse 15, "They were detestable in the sight of God," because they did, in fact, love money and did not, in fact, obey Moses and the prophets.

So the story is directed at the Pharisees. Their hero in the story is the rich man...He's the symbol of a God-blessed life in Israel. On the other hand, they would treat the poor man the same way the rich man did, for they were famous for disdaining outcasts. And, by the way, the Pharisees also believed

in life after death. The Pharisees believed in judgment, and the Pharisees believed in Heaven, and the Pharisees believed in hell. And none of them expected that they would end up in hell.

So, really, on the first front, the Pharisees are the rich man and his five brothers...The Pharisees are the loving money, self-indulging, indifferent, Scripture-rejecting...religious leaders of Israel who are really detestable in the sight of God; and, like the rich man, they wanted a sign before they could believe. They said to Jesus, in Matthew 12:38, "Show us a sign. Show us a sign." He showed a sign all right. He raised Lazarus from the dead, and then He raised Himself from the dead; and when Lazarus came out of the grave, the religious leaders said, "Tell the people it's a lie," and when Jesus came out of the grave, they met together and said, "We have to fabricate something to tell the people this is a hoax." They didn't believe, though there was the sign of all signs, the very resurrection of Jesus Himself.

So they have to be seen in this story first of all. Now, behind them are religious people — people who think they believe in God, who think they're blessed by God, who would be very religious, very devout, very active in their form of religion. So Jesus is really giving them another jolt. He's giving another shock to them in this story. It is directed at those people who are false religionists. But you have to understand that this kind of jolt and this kind of shock to their system and the system of anybody who comfortably thinks he or she is going to heaven because they are religious, when, in fact, they're going to hell, is not an outrageous act. It is, on the other hand, a very compassionate and a very merciful act. Warning people of reality is the...the most compassionate, loving, gracious, kind thing that you can do. Warning self-righteous, religious people that they're gonna end up unintentionally in hell is the most important thing we can do...And that's exactly what Jesus did. Hell is full of people who went there unintentionally, from their perspective. The rich man no more expected to find himself in eternal torment than the Pharisees did when they arrived there. They were among those who gained the world and lost their soul.

Back in the 13th chapter of Luke, there is a similar kind of warning...verse 24 Luke 13, "Strive to enter by the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then He will answer and say to you, 'I don't know where you're from,' and you will being to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence. You taught in our streets.' And He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from. Depart from Me, all you evildoers.' There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth there when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, but yourselves being cast out. They will come from east and west and north and south and recline at the table of the Kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

And, there, Jesus was saying the same thing, "You think you're going to be in the Kingdom, and you're not. You think you're going to be at the great banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the

prophets in the Kingdom of God, and you're gonna be on the outside, cast out, weeping and gnashing your teeth in hell."...

Very similar to the parable Jesus told in Matthew 25 verses 1 to 11 about the virgins who were supposed to be ready for the coming of the bridegroom; and they had lamps, but no oil; and when the bridegroom came, they had no oil to light their lamps. They were shut out. The doors were shut. They were outside, never to be given entrance. Another illustration of what it's like to have a form of religion without the true religion, and be shut out of God's eternal Kingdom. This is a story about a man who thought he was going to Heaven and ended up in hell. And again I say: this is the common experience of the occupants of hell.

Now, as we unfold the story, we're gonna find out what it's like to be in hell, and why this man went there. Two very important considerations: what it's like to be in hell and why this man went there; but we're gonna deal with those issues at the conclusion, because that's the point. It's gonna take us a little time to work through the story. I think three weeks, three Sundays; but I think you're gonna be fascinated by the story at every point. It is story full of extremes. There are extreme contrasts and extreme reversals that mark this story. It's really divided up simply.

First of all, there are three features in the story: life, death, and life after death. Life, death, and life after death. And then come the lessons that the story is intended to convey. But the extremes are so dominant. You know, a good storyteller makes things indelible and unforgettable; and our Lord is the best. In...in somewhat rabbinical fashion, they love to use juxtaposition and contrast and comparison when they taught — the rabbis did. Jesus is the Master at this; and the extremes here, and the reversals here are so marked.

You have a poor man and a rich man. The poor man then becomes rich; and the rich man becomes poor; and the poor man becomes richer than the rich man ever was; and the rich man becomes poorer than the poor man ever was. You have a poor man on the outside of the house, and you have a rich man on the inside. Then comes death, and you have a poor man on the inside and rich man on the outside. You have a poor man with no food, and a rich man with all the food he can possibly need; and then you have a poor man at the great heavenly banquet, and a rich man with absolutely nothing. You have a poor man with needs, and a rich man with no needs; and then you have a poor man with no needs, and a rich man with needs. You have a poor man who desires everything. You have a rich man who desires nothing, and then you have a rich man who will never have his desires fulfilled, and a poor man who has all his desires fulfilled.

You have a poor man who suffers, and a rich man who is satisfied; and then you have a rich man who suffers, and a poor man who's satisfied. You have a poor man who's tormented, and a rich man who's happy; and then you have a poor man who's happy, and a rich man who's tormented. You have a poor man who is humiliated, a rich man who's honored. Then you have a rich man who is

humiliated, and a poor man who is honored. You have a poor man who wants a crumb, a rich man who feasts; and then you have a poor man who's at a feast, and a rich man who wants a drop of water. You have a poor man who seeks help, a rich man who gives none. Then you have a rich man who seeks help, and a poor man who gives none. You have a poor man who is a nobody, a rich man who is well-known; and then you have a poor man who has a name, and a rich man who has none. You have a poor man who has no dignity in death, not even a burial. You have a rich man who has dignity in death. Then you have a poor man who has dignity after death, and a rich man who has no dignity after death, not even a name. You have a poor man with no hope, and a rich man with all hope. Then you have a rich man with no hope, and a poor man who is hope realized.

I mean it's really staggering to see the contrasts and the reversals in the story. The main character is the rich man. The beggar never speaks. Never speaks. He is silent. He is really there for contrast. The story is not about his experience in Heaven. It's not about what it's like to be alongside Abraham at the heavenly banquet. Nothing is said about that. There's no description of his joy, his exhilaration, his peace, his tranquility. There's nothing said about what it was like to be there. It was just that he was there, because it's not about him. This is not about experiences in Heaven. This is about experience in hell and how people get there unintentionally.

And the rich man speaks...while the poor man never says anything. The rich man speaks and gives us the only testimony from hell on the pages of the Bible. That's why it's such an important account. This is the testimony, albeit of a very reluctant witness. This is the testimony of a man from hell, a warning from hell by an occupant; and his message is, "Please tell my brothers something that'll keep them from coming here."

Now the best approach is to kinda cover some of this background, and then to listen to the story. So I'm gonna tell you the beginning of the story, but I have one more thing to say before we do that. The question always come up on this. Is this a true story, or is this a parable? Is this a story that Jesus made up, or is it a real story? And let me just say this. There's only one reason ever given historically in all the commentaries about this particular account for making this a real story; and that is this: that the man who was the poor man had a name...had a name. But I don't find anywhere in the Bible a law that says parables can't include people who have a name. That's not a law of parables.

Although it is unique, although it is the only time when Jesus actually gives a proper name to a character in His parable, it is not to say that it is, therefore, not a parable. We have to look a little more closely to discern, in fact, the character of the story; and we can see whether or not it is a parable; and I'm pretty clear in terms of being convinced that it is, in fact, a parable. It is a story that is imaginary. It is a story that Jesus Himself invented as He did so many stories to make a spiritual point. I'll show you why. Look how it begins.

Verse 19, "Now there was a certain rich man." That is very consistent with the language by which Jesus begins His parables. Chapter 10 verse 30, "A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho." That's, of course, how He began the parable of the Good Samaritan. In chapter 14 and verse 16, which we've already studied, "A certain man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many." Chapter 15, the tale of two sons, verse 11, "A certain man had two sons." And you can see it even in chapter 19 verse 12, "A certain nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself," etc., etc.

And you find other parables outside the Gospel of Luke that are started the same way. So this is pretty familiar parabolic introduction. This sounds like all the other parables. Secondly, it is a story intended to basically identify and forcefully and indelibly and memorably give to us a spiritual truth of great significance; and that is exactly what this story does; and the main character has no name, which seemed that, if it were historical, that everybody should have a name, and there even would be a location to set it apart clearly as historical.

The circumstances of the story itself indicate that it can't be true. It has to be imaginary. Why? Because people in hell can't see into Heaven. The story says that in verse 26, "There's a great chasm fixed." There's nothing in the Bible that indicates that people in hell are watching the activities of Heaven. Nor is there anything to indicate that somebody in hell could look into Heaven, find father Abraham, stop him from walking down the golden streets, and ask him a question, if he would even know who it was, the father Abraham in his glorified form...

And there also is nothing in the Bible to say that when somebody dies, the angels carry them to Heaven. When you die, your spirit goes into Heaven. Your body goes into the grave. This guy died intact, and angels carried him into Heaven. That is not a normal experience with death for a believer. This is a fantasy. This is imaginary. This is Jesus using an imaginary story to convey a point. You say, "Well, wait a minute. What about the name? What about the name?" It's unusual, I agree. It's unique to do that, but there is a very important reason why he has a name; and, in fact, a very important reason why he has the name that he has; and it conveys a critical element of the story. As I said, there are no rules against Jesus naming somebody something if He wanted to in a story. So it's a story made up by Jesus in His wonderfully rich way to convey important spiritual truth.

With that, let's get to the story...The first section is on life, the second one, death; and the third one, life after death. But, for now, let's look at life, okay? What was going on in this story with the main character and the beggar in life, and the extremes are clear. The language, I love the economy of words with which the Lord writes the Scripture; and there's so much said in so few words. That's why it takes me so long to take you through these things; because the richness of these verses really creates an amazing scene.

Let me tell you, if you're gonna understand the story, we have to go back. I have to take you back. You have to be there. You have to be in that environment, understand what those people understood. I've said this so many times. The idea is not to take the Bible and bring it into modern times. You'll inevitably corrupt the Bible if you do that. The idea is to leave the Bible where it is and take the...the reader today and the listener today back and put him in Bible times. So the idea is not to change the Bible to bring it into modern times, but take you back; and let's recreate the scene so you understand what they would think when they were hearing the story.

Let's look, first of all, at life, verse 19. In life, in the story, "There was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, gaily living in...splendor every day." Or joyously living in splendor every day. Now, there's a lot here that tells you that this is an extreme scenario. "There was a rich man." How rich? Extravagantly rich. Luxuriously rich. And by the way, again, I remind, he would be respected immediately. He would be envied immediately, honored. He would be viewed as blessed by God. That's why he was so rich. In Israel, his business had been touched by God; and he would be a hero to the money-loving Pharisees. So he would also be a man who would assume, and everybody would assume, that God had blessed his life; and...and that's why he was as wealthy as he was. So it wouldn't be just the religious who would think that. Anybody would think that, even in general, even today, would look at him. He's a religious man. He's in Israel. He's a part of the society. Look what God has done to bless his life.

How rich was he? Well, "He habitually dressed in purple and fine linen." Imperfect tense, habitually, it means exactly that. It is an imperfect verb that means this was his regular way of dressing. He didn't have a casual day, apparently...He just put it all on every day; and what did he wear? It might not sound like a lot to us, but he dressed in purple and fine linen. Now, let me tell you a little bit about this...this purple, first of all. The outer garment that the people wore in those days if they were wealthy enough was made out of wool; and wool was, for the elite, fulled. You've heard of fulled, F U L L E D, wool. It was placed into a basin, and then it was mingled with clay, and the process, a very time consuming, laborious, hands-on, manual labor to full that wool in clay, produced a kind of white that was almost blazing, brilliant, shining white. Very expensive process done for the elite. They had whiter clothes than everybody else, and it wasn't because of their detergent. It was because of this process the wool was put through.

And then if you wanted to really make it luxurious, you had it dyed with a Tyrian purple dye. That's from Tyre, which is on the north coast of Israel; and this dye came from a shellfish [sea snail] called a murex. Obviously, you had to go get the shellfish [sea snail], and then extract the dye, and it was the most expensive dye. You remember Lydia in the Book of Acts was a seller of this purple dye; and this dye was used to dye the robe purple, which was considered the highest degree of opulence. This is the robe of royalty, the purple robe.

Underneath this robe was fine linen. The normal tunic would be made of fine linen. Probably a reference to the finest linen of the day, which is probably still the finest cotton in today, and the Egyptian cotton. Linen here referring to something made out of cotton. Egyptian cotton was the most expensive and the best and the highest thread count, and you ladies know all about that. So it signified...it signified that this is the finest clothing that somebody could wear, and he wore it every day. He came out in splendor every day.

Not only was he dressed that way, but he was ufrynomi. He was joyously living. It means to be glad to enjoy oneself. It is the verb used in Luke 12. I think it's verse 19, where it says, "The...the man who built the bigger barn said, 'Let's eat, drink, and be merry.'" So he lived a merry life. He lived a joyous life. He lived to the max. He was the party guy, and it was a very luxurious, opulent kind of party. It is described as splendor. Actually an adverb. He lived splendidly; and, again, all the language is over the top here; and he lived like that every day. I mean, for him, every day would be like the feast that the father in Luke 15 gave to the prodigal who came back. Every day would be a killing of a fatted calf kind of event.

Extreme riches, extreme self-indulgence, lavish lifestyle, ostentatious display. He's got it all. He is the definition of what it means to be filthy rich, which is a term devised by poor people...

In contrast...in contrast, verse 20, "A certain poor man," ptochos in the Greek, meaning extreme poverty. Galatians 4:9, "Beggarly, worthless," could be translated pitiful. Could be translated inferior. It's not just he had a little. He had nothing. Destitution...This the absolute 180 extreme. The man has nothing, and...it says, "He's also laid his gate...the gate of the rich man...covered with sores...covered with sores." This is to have ulcers, oozing, open lesions...This same word is used in the Book of Revelation to describe the horrible judgment of God when the angel pours out the first bowl of wrath in the final judgment. It becomes a loathsome and malignant sore, Revelation 16:2, on the man who had the mark of the beast and who worshipped his image. Verse 11, "They blaspheme the God of Heaven because of their pain and their sores." It is an ugly...kind of sore. Where did the sores come from? We don't really have a diagnosis of that, but I can give you a pretty good guess; because, if you go back to the verse, it says, "The poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate." That's not a good translation. That sounds like come...somebody came and just kinda delicately laid him down. That is not a delicate word. That's the word bollo. It means to throw...throw or throw down...

What happens here is you've got a man who is thrown down at the gate to the rich man's house...which indicates that he probably was paralyzed, couldn't move. The sores may well have come from the inability of the man to move, as people who can't move in a bed or can't move in a wheelchair develop sores at all points of pressure.

In fact, in Matthew chapter 8 in verse 6, you have the word bollo connected with paralooptikas. Another man who was a paralytic thrown down. Well, you've got a man here who is absolutely at the

bottom. He has nothing...He's paralyzed...and the people, I guess, feel a measure of sympathy for him; and whoever had been caring for him theoretically couldn't keep doing it. His needs were too profound and too relentless. It was an everyday deal, and there was no future, and there was no recovery, so they just picked him up and hauled him out to the gate of this rich man who had plenty and just dumped him there. Maybe the attitude woulda been something like, you know, "We've done all we can, and we're sick of trying to take care of you. Let's give you to somebody who has a lot more than we do." He was dumped there for the express purpose of being seen by that rich man, so that he could have his needs met. Dumped there in that condition with his oozing, open wounds, which may indicate something of the raggedness of his own clothing, exposing even his body at certain points.

We get a little hint about the rich man also further in verse 20 when it says, "He was laid at his gate," because it's not the normal word for gate. It's the word for big gate, pulw'na. Again, we find this guy has an estate here. This is probably the entry to the courtyard of his house. This wouldn't be an entrance like a mile away or 500 yards away from the house; but this would be the great portal to a great mansion; and he's dumped right at the doorway, a huge, wide high...Very often, this word is used to describe some ornate kind of gate.

What contrast. Here is this rich man on the inside with everything. Here is this poor man on the outside with nothing, but the poor man had the name, and his name, according to verse 20, is Lazarus. By the way, no connection to the brother of Mary and Martha, since that is a real Lazarus and a real historical family; and it was a very common name. Why did Jesus give him a name? Because there's so much in the name. This is part of the story. The name answers the question of why Jesus gave him the name when you know what the name means. Lazarus is the Greek form of the Hebrew Elazar, or Eliazar. It means whom the Lord saved. Whom the Lord helped. Very common name, by the way, in Israel, and a wonderful name for this man, because it tells us how he ended up in Heaven...

Without having to tell the story about him, he becomes the one whom the Lord helped; and how much help did God give him? God gave him the help he needed to have eternal life...which tells us that this man is a believer in the story. He was the no-name as far as society was concerned. He was the no-name as far as the rich man was concerned; but as far as God was concerned, he had a name; and the rich man had no name. You have to have a name in Heaven. Nobody needs a name in hell...

So the rich man, known to everyone, will never be known, because he has no name; but the beggar...known to no one, has a name that God gave him, which describes what God did for him. And, by the way, in a kind of a silly thing. Tradition has given the rich man a name, like he needed equal time...and so, through the years, in the Middle Ages, they called him Dives, so you may have read that somewhere. It means...it's Latin for rich...Well, he didn't have a name. The implication also is, in the story, that the rich man knew Lazarus was there. Probably didn't know his name. Probably

didn't stop to ask him his name, passed him in and out. That's obvious in the story. Everybody would understand that. He's laying at his door. Every time the rich man goes in and out, he's there, passing him daily, doing absolutely nothing, absolutely nothing...indulging himself to the max in complete indifference. Boy, what a picture of the Pharisees...who just despise the outcasts, thought themselves favored by God.

The contrast, you see, is stark in extreme. The rich man has family, friends, royal clothing, lavish lifestyle, feasting, gladness, splendor, honor. Needs nothing. Poor man alone... despised, humiliated, shamed, in rags, crippled, sores, repulsive, miserable, hungry, needs everything. One has the best life. One has the worst life imaginable. Again, these extremes.

Now, the Pharisees would treat that poor man the same way the rich man treated him, which is another indictment of them; and that's the point of this story. The rich man is wicked, because he's so self-indulgent. He has no love for, no sympathy for, no interest in, no compassion toward this suffering man. How religious are you if you do not love your neighbor as yourself?...You know who he's like — he's like the priest in the Levite in Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan. Do you remember, the man was all beat up on the road; and the priest came by? Never did a thing for him. Luke 10:30 to 37. Then the Levite came by. Never did a thing for him. Another indictment of religious people who are indifferent to those in need, because their hearts have never been transformed. That's what's detestable to God — phony religion. They were really into unrighteous mammon. When you go back into the earlier part of the chapter, at the end of verse 13, Jesus said, "You can't serve God in money." They were serving money, not God; and the rich man is a picture of them. So he gave him no help, even though he had to be aware of his suffering.

Now, look a little deeper into the misery of this poor soul, verse 21..."He was longing." Strong word...strong word. Word of passion, desire, desperation. "He was longing to be fed with... the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table." Crumbs is that which the whatever that was falling from the rich man's table. The reason crumbs is placed in, because...is because it's a good...it's a good fit. He just...he would take anything, absolutely anything...that tumbled off the table; but it's more than that. Let me give you a little...I'm gonna take you to dinner in...in Jesus' day, okay?

Now, remember, it's not a pristine world. It's not a pure world. It's not a sanitized world. There are no AB ratings on the doors. You...this is not the way the world is then. This is a really rough kind of world. It's a little bit crude, and it's ...things are a little bit grosser in those days. So Japonias Jeremias writes, and he tells us about this. A very gifted historian, done a lotta great work around that time of the year. He says, that time of human history, "Guests at a meal used pieces of bread to clean their hands." Now, let me tell you what the...how the picture works. In those days, you might have a little fruit and a little vegetable or whatever, but they ate with their hands. There weren't any knives and forks and all that. So you basically ate with your hands as...as most of the world has done for most of its history; and, typically, you took bread — bread being a staple — and you dipped it in some kind of

stew or thick soup or whatever; and you ate that way. You ate the bread, like at the Last Supper, dipped in a sop, remember?

Okay? So that's what you did. Well, I mean it's a little messy; and they didn't have paper napkins; and I guess they could've used cloth if they had to; but they had a really good method for cleaning up the mess on their hands. They used the bread that was a little more stale. Now, there would be some bread on the table that was to be dipped. Then there would be other bread that was to then be used to mop up your...your hands. Now, the bread had the capability of absorbing the sop, and you ate it that way; and it also the capability of absorbing what was dripping all over your hands; and so they would use the bread to clean their hands and then throw it under the table.

You say, "Not at my house, they wouldn't." I know that. This isn't your house. We understand that. I'm not gonna try that on Patricia and see how it works...That's what they did. They also had a built-in cleanup crew. You say, "Why would they throw it under the table?" Well, they had a built-in cleanup crew. Listen to this. Matthew 15...26, Jesus says this, "It's not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." I mean that's a simple principle. You know, you got some bread on the table for the kids. You don't throw that to the dogs. What do you mean "Throw to the dogs"? Next verse, "She said, 'Yes, Lord, even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from the table.'" Who's the cleanup crew? Dogs.

Now listen, folks. You gotta know a little more about this. These dogs are not man's best friend. They aren't frou-frou dogs with ribbons in their ears...This is not the kind of dogs we're talking about here. These dogs are always presented in the Bible as...scavengers, mongrels...sort of semi-wild, not domesticated, ugly. Was just the way it was in the world at that time. They roamed the cities. They roamed the periphery of the cities eating the garbage, and they came in, and in these open courtyards where meals would be held, they would clean up the bread that had been thrown there; and so the rich man has this big feast. The people are eating, taking the bread they needed to cleaning, throwing it under there. The dogs were coming and eating it; and the poor man would've given anything if he could have moved himself under the table with the dogs...to get some of that dirty bread. That's how desperate this man was...

Dogs are always pictured as dirty. Second Peter 2:22 says, "The dogs lick up their own vomit."...He wanted to get down there with the dogs and eat the dirty bread. It reminds me of another man in the 15th chapter, the prodigal who wound up eating with what? Pigs. Such a humiliated situation. So destitute. He's road kill, really. He's being treated as if he's dead by the rich man. That's how the Pharisees would treat him, too.

Then everything changes. Everything changes in verse 22. "Now it came about that the poor man died...and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's side. And the rich man also died. He had a funeral, and in Hades or hell, he lifted up his eyes." What that simply means is he...realized he was

in hell. This is the great reversal. How did the rich man get there? Well, we're gonna find that out...But before we find out how he got there, we're gonna find out what it is like to be there. That's next week. Let's pray.

Father, we need so much to understand Your precious true Word and not live under illusion, deception, confusion of the ...the archenemy of truth and the great liar of all liars — Satan and all of his myriad of emissaries who perpetrate the lies. There is a Heaven, but there is a hell; and most people who think they're going to Heaven are not...They're gonna end up like this rich man...and with no hope for anything ever changing...Help us to come to grips with the reality of this, to consider the seriousness with which our Lord gives this message. The compassion, the sympathy, the love that's in it and the warning. We know that only those the Lord helps, the Lord saves through faith in Jesus Christ will escape this hell and this torment. We thank You for the glorious, wondrous Gospel of Jesus Christ... in whom is our eternal deliverance. And, Father, we thank You for Your Word which opens up to us the truth about everything. Everything we know, we know because or Your Word. We...all our understanding of life in all its fullness comes from Your Word. This is true. This is reality. This is how it really is. We thank You for such a revelation, such a warning which can lead us to repentance and trust in Christ. To that end, we pray; and that we would be faithful in proclaiming this warning message. Use us in that way. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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