

# CAPITOL STUDIES

FEBRUARY 25, 2026 • WEEK 7



## LUKE FOR LEGISLATORS SECOND SESSION

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### *Theme Verse*

#### Luke 19:10

For the Son of Man has come to **seek** and to **save** that which was **lost**.



## The Rich Man and Lazarus



GARY INRIG REMARKS THAT “when Henry David Thoreau was on his deathbed, he was visited by a minister who urged his dying friend to be ready for death: ‘Do you know where you’re going in the next world?’ Thoreau waved him away with the words, ‘One world at a time.’ His attitude has caused humanists to uphold him as a man of moral courage, resisting a cowardly flight to religion. He was, in fact, the model of a fool. Imagine a man in Florida boarding a plane to Alaska in mid-winter with no baggage, who answers the question, ‘Do you know where you’re going?’ with ‘One city at a time, my friend.’ Only a fool fails to plan ahead for the inevitable.”<sup>1</sup>

Luke chapter 16 gives us two parables. Last week we discussed the parable of the steward who was dishonest in his oversight of his master’s possessions, yet he was wise in preparing for his future. After Jesus shared this parable, Luke says, “Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him” (Luke 16:14). The word translated “scoffing” here means “to ridicule, to sneer at, to show contempt for.” It is used only here and in Luke 23:35, where it is used to describe the scoffing directed at Christ as He hung on the cross.

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## INTRODUCTION

This word for “scoffing” here means literally “to turn up the nose.” The Pharisees simply turned up their noses at Christ’s teaching. The intensified form of the word here tells us that they were scoffing at Him openly. Luke gives us the reason—they loved money (possessions), power, and position. They looked at Jesus and saw a poor Galilean peasant, and they laughed out loud.<sup>2</sup> So, Jesus shares a story about a rich man, a rich man who did not make it to heaven.

This is the story of a man who had much wealth, who was *not* prepared for his eternal future, and a poor man named Lazarus, who, though he had no money, *was* prepared for his future. Both of these stories revolve around money and the future. Both also have a direct connection to the theme of the book of Luke: “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

Many Christians take little thought of the future and live only in the present when considering rewards. Jesus did not commend the dishonesty of the manager but rather acknowledged his prudent action that prepared for his future. Christians are to use whatever has been committed to them to help prepare for the future both on earth and in heaven. Be careful of things with only an earthly reward. Think and plan in light of eternity. Here, then, is the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. We see the stark contrasts in these three stanzas:

### I. THE CONTRASTS IN LIFE

*Luke 16:19-21*

*Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. <sup>20</sup>And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, <sup>21</sup>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.<sup>3</sup>*

#### A. The Billionaire, Sometimes Called “Dives”

This rich man didn’t lack for this world’s creature comforts. To dress in ‘purple’ put him on the level of a king in this world. Every day he showed off his wealth and possessions as he celebrated royally. “λαμπρῶς [*in splendor*] may be rendered in a number of languages as ‘richly’ or ‘with things which cost a great deal’ or ‘with more possessions than one can count.’”<sup>4</sup> The Pharisees reasoned, “if a man has great earthly blessing, then God must be pleased with him.”<sup>5</sup> This rich man was (1) prosperous, (2) clothed in purple, (3) living in splendor (he didn’t need help from anyone), and (4) satiated (full).

#### B. The Beggar Called Lazarus

This man was certainly in great need. He was starving. Lazarus was destitute. He was abandoned, left at the rich man’s gate. He was covered in sores, a plight made more horrible when dogs came and licked his sores. He needed God’s help. Lazarus was (1) poor, (2) covered in sores,



(3) lying at the gate (he was unable to help himself), and (4) starving. “In ancient cultures—as well as many Eastern societies today—disabled people were taken by family or friends to beg at the entrance of public venues, especially places of worship. At night, they were returned home. In this case, however, Lazarus was not left in a high-traffic, public location, but dumped on the doorstep of a billionaire, not unlike leaving a baby on the doorstep of a hospital. The way Jesus framed the story strongly suggests that Lazarus had become the rich man’s responsibility.”<sup>6</sup> His crumbs could have kept Lazarus from starving. His servants could have washed Lazarus’ sores and given him clean clothing. The rich man had opportunity to help, but he did not. Do you see the contrast Jesus painted with word pictures?

## II. THE CONTRASTS IN DEATH

*Luke 16:22-23*

*Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup>In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.*

### A. Both Men Died

“The rich and poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all’ (Prov. 22:2). As John Donne said, death is the ‘great leveler.’”<sup>7</sup> Since Lazarus was so poor, his body was likely hauled to where paupers were cast, the valley of Gehenna, the garbage dump of Jerusalem. Bodies of those abandoned or destitute were burned there. The rich man’s body, on the other hand, would have been taken in great fanfare for burial in an elite tomb, his five brothers mourning loudly.

### B. Both Souls Lived

Lazarus was carried—what a beautiful way to go! God sent His angels to carry Lazarus to Him. The rich man was buried—there was nothing beautiful about this because he awakened in the fire of Hades.

### C. Lazarus went to Abraham’s Bosom/Paradise

Abraham’s Bosom was the realm of the saved/redeemed/righteous. “This same expression (found only here in Scripture) was used in the Talmud [teachings of Jewish leaders that served as a guide for Jewish life] as a figure for heaven. The idea was that Lazarus was given a place of high honor, reclining next to Abraham at the heavenly banquet.”<sup>8</sup>

### D. Dives Went to Hades

Hades represents the realm of the wicked/unrighteous/unrepentant. “Christ pictured Hades as a place where the unspeakable torment of hell had already begun. Among the miseries featured here are unquenchable flame; an accusing conscience fed by undying memories of lost opportunity (v. 25); and permanent, irreversible separation from God and everything good (v. 26).”<sup>9</sup>





*Luke 16:24-26*

*And he cried out and said, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.”<sup>25</sup> But Abraham said, “Child, 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.<sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.”*

“‘Torment’ comes from a Greek word meaning ‘severe pain caused by torture.’”<sup>10</sup> The torment/agony of hell is real, and it is unending. It seems that the rich man knew he could not leave, but he was hopeful that help could be sent through Lazarus. “Abraham said, ‘between us and you there is a great chasm fixed.’ No traffic moves between heaven and hell. Mark well that... word *chasm*. It is a medical word and can be rendered ‘an open wound.’ That explains it! ‘Between me and him is an open wound.’ What keeps a lost person in hell? An open wound! The wound, thrust deep into the Savior’s side. God sees that wound, and His wrath burns. What keeps a saved person in heaven? An open wound that pleads the blood of Christ to cancel God’s wrath.”<sup>11</sup>

“Now the roles have been reversed. While Lazarus had longed for crumbs from the rich man’s table, the billionaire begs for a drop of water. Their suffering cannot compare, however; while Lazarus’s agony ended, the rich man’s will endure for all eternity.”<sup>12</sup> Though Lazarus had no physical wealth on this earth, he had at some point turned to God for his soul’s spiritual need. That decision determined his eternal destiny. The rich man’s wealth did nothing to prepare him for eternity. Undoubtedly, he would gladly have sacrificed it all, if only he could have lived his life again.

**But there is no second chance after death.** Hebrews 9:27 states, “It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.” As has been often said, “There are no unbelievers in hell.” They just believed too late.

### III. THE CONTRASTS IN ETERNITY

*Luke 16:27-31*

*And he said, “Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father’s house—<sup>28</sup>for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.”<sup>29</sup> But Abraham said, “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.”<sup>30</sup> But he said, “No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!”<sup>31</sup> But he said to him, “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.”*

Not only is the rich man in extreme physical pain, but he is in emotional torment at the thought of his five brothers joining him in this place of agony. He thinks surely they will recognize Lazarus and know that he came back from the dead. Abraham reminds Dives that his brothers have



God's Word (Moses and the Prophets). But Dives probably knows his brothers will be like him and won't listen to that, so he continues to plead. Abraham states the reality, "If they don't listen to God's Word, they won't listen to someone risen from the dead." Millennia have demonstrated that sinners continue to refuse belief in the Risen Lord.

## CONCLUSION

Since this parable contained so many particulars, could it be an actual account of what happened to two very different people? Some think so. Whether that is the case or not matters not. This powerful parable warns of a hell to shun and a heaven to gain. It all hinges on that little word "repent." To repent means to turn to Jesus in sorrow for one's sin, knowing you need His rescue. It means to make a complete change in your attitude and actions, a "180," as we have said before. Instead of living life for self, you live your life in the way that would most show obedience, honor, and love to God. You do that with release, without reserve, and without regret. Have you come to Jesus in repentance and faith, believing He will rescue you from your sin? Is your life different? This does not mean that you will lead a perfect, sinless life. It does mean that you will continue to make progress in becoming more and more like Jesus. If you cannot remember a time when you repented, don't put it off. Do it now. We don't know what tomorrow will bring.

Chaplain Arin Hess

## FOOTNOTES

1. Gary Inrig, *The Parables: Understanding What Jesus Meant*, Discovery House, 1991, pg. 124.
- 2, 4. J.P. Louw, & Nida, E. A. In *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition), United Bible Societies, 1996, Vol. 1, p. 434. p. 768.
3. All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1995 Update.
- 5, 6, 10, 12. Charles Swindoll, *Insights on Luke*, Zondervan, 2012, pgs. 398-401.
7. Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Victor Books, 1996, Volume 1, pg.41.
- 8, 9. John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, Word Publishing, 1997, pg. 1548.
11. John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of Luke: An Expository Commentary*, Kregel Publications, 2009.



