

Unifying Topic: **JESUS TEACHES COMPASSION FOR THE POOR**

Lesson Text

I. The Characters Introduced (Luke 16:19-21)

II. The Role Reversal (Luke 16:22-23)

III. The Conversation (Luke 16:24-31)

The Main Thought: He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. (Luke 16:10, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Selfishness motivates the attitudes and behaviors of many people. How does selfishness blind Christians to the needs of other? Jesus tells the story of Lazarus and the rich man to teach his followers to put their selfish desires aside so they can help the poor.

Lesson Aim: To help Christians understand the importance of caring for the poor.

Life aim: To encourage Christians to become more involved in their congregations in developing projects to raise awareness of need and help the poor in the community.

16:19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

16:20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

16:21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

16:22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

16:23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

16:24 And 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.

16:25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

16:26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

16:27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

16:28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

16:29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

16:30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

16:31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

HISTORY:

CHAPTER 16:1-3 This section deals with Jesus' parables about money to His disciples. Two men are not named. A rich man hired an accountant to handle his affairs, but the accountant was dishonest and therefore wasted the rich man's goods. Therefore the rich man heard about it and had to confront and deal with this accountant. He is known as the unjust steward to some. ¹The steward referred to here does not own the wealth himself, but he has the privilege of enjoying it and using it for the profit of his master. However, he forgets that he is a steward and begins to act as if he is the owner and wastes his master's wealth. Before the rich man judges him too quickly, he asks him to give account over the business; let's check the books of this accusation of not being a good steward, because he may not be the steward very long! So the accountant asks what could he do to rectify this for he didn't have the strength to go out and dig ditches, and he was too ashamed to beg.

So he came up with a solution within himself. He invited each one who owed money to his employer to come and discuss their situation. He asked what they owed, it was told and he said write it quickly but pay half of what you owe. Even though the accountant stole from the rich man, he was admired because of his shrewdness. The point is that the world is wiser in their material pursuits than God's people are in their spiritual pursuits.

- He looked out for himself, his personal welfare. In this he was very wise.
- He was dedicated and sold out to taking care of his future.

Jesus stresses the point that Christians are to use material wealth for good, not for seeking friendship of the wealthy.

16:4-9 Money has the power to become master and thereby leave God out, but it will surely fail you at death. His mistake was being sold out to pursuing material wealth and comfort instead of Christ. God wants us to take notice that we, being stewards over all God has given us, we will one day give account as stewards.

¹ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/the-parable-of-the-shrewd-manager/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

Being a good steward, Jesus points out saying: He that is faithful in least is faithful in much; he that is unjust in least is unjust in much. Being unfaithful in the unrighteous money, or another man's wealth, no one will trust you.

- Unfaithfulness disqualifies one from true, heavenly riches.
- Unfaithfulness disqualifies one from all he would receive.

16:10-15 You can't serve two masters, either you will hate one and love the other; hold to one and despise the other. You can't serve God and money. The Pharisees that were standing by, heard this and they were bothered, for they were said to be covetous (desirous and greedy) of money. Jesus spoke to them and called them out by saying: *"You wear a noble, pious expression in public, but God knows your evil hearts. Your pretense brings you honor from the people, but it is an abomination in the sight of God."* ²Many professing Christians today are making the same mistake. With their lips they honor the Lord; but with their wealth, they live like the world. God wants men to center their lives on the things of the heart, not around the things they possess. Material possessions pass away; spiritual possessions endure forever!

16:16-17 ³Until the coming of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, the only message Old Testament saints had was the law of Moses and the prophets. The Pharisees prided themselves in their obedience to this law, but they refused to accept the Savior of whom Moses wrote about. Jesus emphasized that His kingdom fulfilled the Law (the Old Testament) it did not cancel it out; it did not do away with it. It's still as strong as the heavens and earth.

LESSON:

Luke 16:19-21 The Characters Introduced

16:19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:— This certain rich man is not known by name, but he's wealthy...

- **clothed himself in "purple and fine linen"** —showing that he had the latest styles and the ultimate luxury. He was able to buy and wear whatever he wanted.
- **He "fared"** (feasted everyday; lived however he wanted) **"sumptuously"** (flamboyantly; displaying his wealth in materialistic ways) **"everyday"** seeking daily the things and pleasures of this world.

Now that's what he thought living was all about or is it.

16:20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,— Now we come to a certain beggar man who is known by name —Lazarus. His name brings importance to him for Jesus knows his name. There is a difference between known and unknown to God as we will see later. This is not the same Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead. This Lazarus was laid daily at the gate of the rich man because there was food there, and there was wealth there. The "gate" was a large gate indicating that his home was a large house, or even a mansion. Lazarus was in an unhealthy state—full of sores. He needed more attention than what he was receiving.

16:21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. Well, we can surmise that:

- The rich man was wealthy and had plenty to eat, but the beggar man desired to be fed crumbs falling from the rich man's table. However, the rich man neglected and gave no recognition to the beggar at the gate. He had much that could have been given, but he failed to do so.
- The rich man was healthy and had plenty to eat, but the beggar man had sores all over his body where the dogs came and licked them. He was too weak to shoo away the dogs.

The rich man and the poor man introduced here are very different, but their lives end up reversed.

Luke 16:22-23 The Role Reversal

16:22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;— In the course of time, the beggar man (Lazarus) died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. However, when the rich man died, he was buried. There was a difference in their deaths. *"Abraham's bosom"* refers to *"Paradise."* It was a term that expressed the happiness that believers could expect upon death. The *"bosom of Abraham"* referred to him being the father of the Jewish nation.

² <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/the-law-the-prophets-and-the-kingdom/>

³ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/the-law-the-prophets-and-the-kingdom/>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

⁴Before the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, everybody who died went to Sheol/Hades, which was at that time divided into at least two compartments. One was a place of torment, while the other was a place of blessing, which was referred to as Abraham's Bosom. After Jesus Christ rose from the dead, He ascended to the Father, taking the saints who were in Abraham's Bosom to heaven with Him. Thus, He took "captivity captive" (see Eph. 4:8-10).

Notice, the rich man died and was buried, no angels carrying him like they did Lazarus who was a nobody in the eyes of the world. Lazarus was now resting in the arms of Abraham. What a role reversal of their legacy. The rich man was probably buried with great fan-fare, in the finest of clothes, and in the very best grave and cemetery. And the people that attended spoke good words over him of how rich he was. You notice I said "was." He couldn't take it with him. It was all left right there on earth, but he spent it well on himself while on earth. But Lazarus is now in complete rest; complete wholeness, and in the presence of complete love. In the next verse we see just the opposite for the rich man.

16:23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. The Greek word for "Hell" is "Hades; the unseen world." The most important thing is where are you going when you leave this earth? Well, it says in hell the rich man lifted up his eyes in torment.

• The rich man was buried	• Lazarus was carried by the angels
The rich man was in hell	• Lazarus was in the bosom of Abraham
• The rich man's wealth was left on earth	• Lazarus was carried where the source of all wealth was
• The rich man was in torment	• Lazarus was comforted; experiencing glory
• The rich man possessed nothing	• Lazarus possessed everything

The rich man never considered the state of Lazarus; never had the compassion or generosity for the poor ⁵while he wallowed in luxury. It was not what he did that got him into hell; it was what he did not do that got him there. His was the punishment of the man he never noticed. He could look on the world's suffering and need and feel no pain of grief or let pity pierce his heart; he looked at a fellow-man, hungry and in pain, and did nothing about it.

Luke 16:24-31 The Conversation

16:24 And 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. The rich man now sees that death is not the end, it is the beginning into a whole new existence in another world. The tables have turned. And there is a conversation going on with him crying to Father Abraham. Seeing Lazarus, the rich man is the one crying out instead of Lazarus. He begs and pleads now to Father Abraham to have mercy on him. He was burning with such misery and pain from the flame (the wrath of God). If mercy won't free him, then he just desires Lazarus, the one he had neglected while on earth, to be sent to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue because he's tormented in this flame. For the unbeliever, death means to be away from God's presence and in torment. Well, we see he's still thinking of himself; wanting relief—mercy was his first request and water was his second request!

16:25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. The rich man, thinking he was a seed of Abraham had called Abraham Father as to his devotion to the Jewish faith. So Abraham called the rich man "son", which meant "child." And as you would address a child, Abraham reminds him that he had opportunity to help Lazarus, and he didn't. A child of Abraham would help! While the rich man received everything good, Lazarus received evil things. If he had only showed compassion and generosity toward Lazarus, then both of them would have been in Abraham's bosom together because he would have had a changed heart.

16:26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Abraham says that there is a division; there

⁴ <https://www.bereanbiblesociety.org/hell-sheol-hades-paradise-and-the-grave/>

⁵ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/the-rich-man-and-lazarus/>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

is an unseen world; and two areas are separated by a great gulf that is impassable to cross. One area is the place of sorrow, punishment and pain; the other area is the place of comfort and presence of God where believers go. Neither one can pass into the other.

16:27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:— Then the rich man replies back with a third request saying, "I pray father that you would send Lazarus to my father's house." Wow, at one time he didn't even know who Lazarus was, and now he wants him to go on errands. His lifestyle speaks for itself. He was always ordering people around, so he thinks he can still do the same. Well, why does he want him to go to his father's house?

16:28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. It's because he has five brothers that he want to warn to not come to this tormenting place. Testify to them, How? Lazarus has never been there to Hell to testify about it. The rich man knew they were headed for that place because of their lifestyles. He now is unable to intercede for his family. And the rich man knew they were also headed for that place because of their lifestyles.

16:29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. Abraham lets the rich man know that they have Moses and the prophets to hear. They will testify instead.

16:30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. The rich man is still pleading, trying to get his way. Just as he didn't listen before, he's still not listening. Now, he wants someone from the dead to come to them. He thinks they will surely repent, and turn from their wicked and evil ways.

16:31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. Aha! Abraham informs him if they didn't hear Moses and the prophets, surely they will not be persuaded from someone from the dead! Jesus has risen from the dead, yet men still do not believe Him.

SUMMARY:

Jesus began with a parable which centers around a rich man and a beggar man named Lazarus. One lived good on the earth with all kinds of wealth. The other begged for a living and ate the crumbs from the rich man's table. At the gate he sat as the dogs licked his sores (16:19-21).

At the time of death the beggar is carried to Abraham's bosom by the angels; the rich man is just buried. The rich man's eyes are open in hell to see Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham (16:22-23).

The rich man cried for Father Abraham to have mercy on him, begging for Lazarus to come touch his tongue with water with the tip of his finger, just to cool the tormenting flames that he's in. But Abraham brings up his past—remember your former life? He received everything good, while Lazarus received evil, but now the tables have turned and Lazarus is comforted, and the rich man is tormented. And another thing, there is a gulf that separates the two of them; neither can get to the other; neither can cross over. The rich man is fixed in hell; Lazarus is fixed in Paradise. The rich man wants Lazarus to go to his family's house, for he has five brothers that need to be warned about the place of torment he is in. Well, if that didn't work, send someone from the dead to them. Abraham tells him that they have Moses and the prophets to tell them. He's still pleading, that by sending someone from the dead to them, they would repent. **The point is** that we should be hearing the living, now, because if they didn't received the message from Moses and the prophets (the living), they will neither hear the dead speak to them (16:24-31).

APPLICATION:

⁶The first resurrection is of believers who will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive rewards based on meritorious service to Him. The second resurrection will be that of unbelievers who will stand before the Great White Throne Judgment of God. At that point, all will be sent to their eternal destinations—the wicked to the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15), and the righteous to a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21—22). Be the believers receiving crowns to adorn on him!

⁶ <http://www.gotquestions.org/paradise.html>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>