

Faith and Love C.O.G.I.C Sunday School

Lesson 9 January 28, 2024

COMPASSION FOR THE POOR



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COMPASSION FOR THE POOR

- ▶ Bible Basis: Luke 16:19–31
- ▶ Bible Truth: Compassion and generosity are important Christian values.
- ▶ Memory Verse: “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)
- ▶ Lesson Aim: By the end of the lesson, we will REVIEW the story of the rich man and Lazarus; DISCUSS our feelings about compassion toward the poor; and CONSIDER involving our congregation in developing a project that addresses selfishness and has a positive effect on everyone’s attitudes and actions toward the poor.

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Lesson Scripture: Luke 16:19–31, KJV

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

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

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.

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;



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Lesson Scripture: Luke 16:19–31, KJV

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

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.

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.



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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.

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

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



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Lesson Scripture: Luke 16:19–31, KJV

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

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

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.



LIGHT ON THE WORD

Hades is also known as Sheol or “place of the dead” in the Old Testament. This is the region of departed spirits for those who died. Its meaning translated denotes the underworld and was believed to be the immediate state between death and resurrection. In Jesus’ parable, it is an impassable gulf or chasm that separates the lost from the righteous.

Abraham’s bosom is believed to be the compartment of Hades for those who died in right standing with God due to their faith and obedience to the law. In the Talmud, a collection of rabbinic commentary of the Hebrew Bible, it is mentioned as the place where the soul rests after death. It is a place of privilege for Abraham’s righteous children.

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Teaching the Bible Lesson

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON:

AIM: We will not measure people by what they do
or what they have.



INTRODUCTION

God Reads the Heart

Jesus declared that the Kingdom of God runs counter to the dominant culture. The Pharisees relished their wealth and power, but Jesus warned them that they fell short of God's standards. He bruised their egos by letting them know God reads the heart, so it was useless to justify themselves based on their works (verse 15).

BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: We will learn the importance of sharing
what we have with the less fortunate.

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COMPASSION FOR THE POOR

I. TWO DISPARATE LIVES

Luke 16:19-21

Jesus introduced Lazarus, a homeless beggar who stayed at the gate. As a part of the lowest social caste, he relied on the mercy and kindness of others to receive crumbs to eat. Unlike the rich man, his existence was survival mode, he was unhealthy and malnourished. His clothes were tattered and worn. He lived in constant pain from sores that covered his body. As an outcast, the only touch he received was from the dogs who licked his wounds. Lazarus lived in a constant state of need. Jesus took time and care to set up this story to communicate a message that is consistent with God's love and care for the poor and His disdain for those who would mistreat them.

I. TWO DISPARATE LIVES

Luke 16:19-21

In establishing the Children of Israel as a nation, God always made provision to care for the poor, widows, orphans, those enslaved due to debt, and foreigners (Exodus 22:21–24; Leviticus 23:22; Deuteronomy 15:4–8, 11). God commands His people to be a blessing to those in need and to show the same compassion He has shown. **Their abundance was never meant to be hoarded but to be given freely so that no one would be in lack.**

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COMPASSION FOR THE POOR

I. TWO DISPARATE LIVES

Luke 16:19-21

Purple was a royal color in Jesus' time, like the purple "kingly" robe mockingly tossed around His bleeding body to match his "crown" of thorns (John 19:2, 5). Lydia was a dealer in purple cloth (Acts 16:14). Fine linens refer to high-quality undergarments made in Egypt. Both the ESV and RSV bibles use the term "feasted sumptuously," although "fared" (Gk. euphraino, yu-FRI-no) essentially means to celebrate or make merry, as in "eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke 12:19), which clearly includes feasting. A familiar concept in any period, the set up of the parable clearly is a person living in the lap of luxury and enjoying the finest of everything.

I. TWO DISPARATE LIVES

Luke 16:19-21

Unique among all of Jesus' parables, here He named one of His characters. When Jesus named the poor man and left the rich man unnamed this shows the most important figure in the story since, normally, the rich would be named, and the poor would be nameless. Dr. Luke's use of "sores," meaning ulcerations, in one of the few instances in scripture with the single use of a Greek or Hebrew word not repeated elsewhere (Gk. helkoo, hel-KO-o). Since the man was "full of sores", that indicates a truly pitiful state.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Abraham's Bosom

In this parable, both Lazarus and the rich man died, then Jesus gave them a glimpse of the afterlife. Some scholars argue whether Jesus meant to give a portrait of the afterlife or was simply telling a story, but He made the point that there is existence of the soul after death. Lazarus died and was carried away by angels to Abraham's bosom, which, according to Jewish tradition, was the place of rest for those who died in the faith of Abraham. According to early rabbis, Abraham's bosom was believed to be "paradise." According to tradition, Abraham sits at the gate to welcome the Children of Israel.

II. HEAVEN AND HELL

Luke 16:22-26

Jesus gave us dramatic detail of the rich man's torment as he sought to receive just a drop of water because of the intense heat of the flames. Abraham reminded the rich man of the life he lived on earth and how he had everything while Lazarus had lived in lack, constant pain, and shame. Now the roles had been reversed: Lazarus was in comfort and the rich man was in agony. One could argue the rich man had a lot of nerve wanting Lazarus to relieve his agony when he showed no compassion to Lazarus while on earth, but God shows us through Jesus that He will always care for the poor, and the selfish will receive their just reward (Psalm 147:6). Abraham spoke to the rich man, noting that there was a gulf or chasm separating them so no one could pass between.

II. HEAVEN AND HELL

Luke 16:22-26

Hannah provided a similar picture in her prayer about God's justice for the poor: "They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased . . . He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and he hath set the world upon them" (1 Samuel 2:5, 8).

II. HEAVEN AND HELL

Luke 16:22-26

In the reversal, angels escorted the once lowly Lazarus to Abraham's bosom or side, which is the ultimate contentment for believing Jews (cf. Matthew 8:11)—“a poetic description of heaven,” writes Philips, adding, “at death we are not left to find our own way home”. For other uses of the same Greek word, Jesus was in the Father's bosom (John 1:18), and John leaned on Jesus' bosom (John 13:23). No one really knows what happens on the other side, but it is comforting that Jesus provided a picture of a gracious escort.

II. HEAVEN AND HELL

Luke 16:22-26

For those who manage to escape judgment for their evil deeds in this life, it is also comforting to know that they will not escape ultimate justice. Paul tells us that those believers who fall asleep are with Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23). In contrast, biological Jews are not guaranteed a place at Abraham's bosom by their bloodline alone—rather, along with the rest of unrepentant humanity, they also will face divine judgment.

II. HEAVEN AND HELL

Luke 16:22-26

Lazarus' reunion with Abraham contrasted with his previous life with dogs for company. The rich man's former luxury ended and was replaced with torment—a more serious condition than Lazarus' former humiliation.

Lazarus' new reality of blessing also placed him with patriarchs of the faith (cf. John 8:39), much like the modern future hope of being rejoined with loved ones as well as saints who passed before.

II. HEAVEN AND HELL

Luke 16:22-26

The reversal continued with Lazarus' future in heaven compared with the rich man's opposite future in hell, which is the "lower parts of the earth" (Ephesians 4:9). Craddock describes this as the "flames of Hades". In life, the rich man was blessed, and Lazarus suffered, but both temporarily. In death, Lazarus was blessed, and the rich man suffered, now eternally (cf. the contrasts of the poor versus the rich in the Beatitudes, Luke 6:20–26). Whatever hell looks like, clearly there is terrible torment, and fire is a perfect depiction.

II. HEAVEN AND HELL

Luke 16:22-26

Jesus' message to the Pharisees is clear: Just as the rich man was fatally wrong to ignore Lazarus and have no compassion on him, so the Pharisees were just as fatally wrong in their self-righteous and cold-hearted lifestyle. Other Old Testament laws pointed to having mercy on the poor and transients (e.g., Lev. 19:9–10; Deu. 15:7–11 even speaking of a gate like the rich man's). In fact, Isaiah 58:6–7 directs the sharing of bread with the hungry, housing the homeless, and clothing the naked (cf. Matthew 25:35–36). Thus, the Pharisees—like prosperity preachers today—severely miss, to their peril, the point of material blessing. It is not earthly reward for human righteousness to be squandered in unrighteousness; rather, it is **earthly seed to be generously sown in humility** for heavenly reward. Ryle said, "Wealth is not a sign of God's favor; poverty is not a sign of God's displeasure" (Luke, 215).

II. HEAVEN AND HELL

Luke 16:22-26

Not only did Jesus state unequivocally that hell is real, but also that there is an unbridgeable, uncrossable chasm between—“No traffic moves between heaven and hell” (Philips, 221). The fate of the two men ends with an “utter and unchangeable finality” (Craddock, 192). Death visits ten out of ten people and strikes both the poor and the rich—for one, the trials end; for the other, the blessings end—for both, judgment begins. “Death is a great fact that everyone acknowledges but very few people take into account,” states Ryle (Luke, 215), adding, “There are perhaps few more awful passages in the Bible than this” (216).

LIGHT ON THE WORD

The Power of the Word

Jesus taught His listeners then—and us today— that if the Word of God delivered through the power of the Holy Spirit is not enough to convince and draw men and women to repentance, nothing else is available. Therefore, today it's our responsibility as Christians to make disciples, covering the earth with the Word of truth. Then, at the judgment, no one will be able to say they didn't hear the Gospel or had the opportunity to receive the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. There is no other sacrifice for sin and no other way to the Father but through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:26–31; John 14:6; Romans 10:9–13).

III. A PLEA FOR THOSE STILL LIVING

Luke 16:37-31

Jesus closed out this parable with the rich man making a final appeal to Abraham on behalf of those he left behind. Still arrogant, the rich man asked for Lazarus to be sent back among the living to warn his brothers of the torment to come if they do not make things right (i.e., repent). In both Jewish and Hellenistic traditions, there was a belief that the dead can make appeals on behalf of the living; this is why, in Catholic traditions, people pray to patron saints.

III. A PLEA FOR THOSE STILL LIVING

Luke 16:37-31

According to Craddock, the Pharisees “did not follow their own scripture, the ‘Law and the Prophets’ (verse 16); so they were no better than the rich man’s brothers who ‘have Moses and the Prophets’ (verse 29)” (Luke, 421). The rich man found out the hard way just how far off was his and his family’s interpretation of scripture. Abraham informed him that the **scriptures would be sufficient to teach his brothers properly if only they would be willing to listen.** Speaking through Abraham to the Pharisees via the parable, Jesus exposed their flawed theology and their empty hearts.

III. A PLEA FOR THOSE STILL LIVING

Luke 16:37-31

The rich man desperately believed if his brothers only saw Lazarus alive, they would repent. Jesus clearly stated that not even a dead person raised to life would persuade the hard-hearted (verse 31). The Pharisees soon would personally witness this event twice, and their hearts not only would remain stone cold but would grow even more evil.

Craddock writes: “The rejection of the risen Christ had its root in the misunderstanding of the true meaning of the Law and the Prophets” (Luke, 197). Everything Jesus did was true to scripture and, most importantly, according to a proper understanding of it—about which He was intentional in teaching His disciples (24:25–27, 44–47).

III. A PLEA FOR THOSE STILL LIVING

Luke 16:37-31

This parable contains a strong warning to heed the Word when it brings conviction and to not harden your heart, because your decisions in life have consequences on the inevitable judgment day. Stein said, “Life is to be lived with eternity’s values in view” (Luke, 421). Jesus made it clear that that the rich man’s eternal demise came from his own decisions and hardness of heart—just like the Pharisees consciously and selectively rejected the words of Moses and the prophets (Luke 16:29; cf. John 5:46). He may have prophesied about His own resurrection, knowing that not even that miracle of miracles would cause them to repent and change their ways.

III. A PLEA FOR THOSE STILL LIVING

Luke 16:37-31

Please note it was not the rich man's wealth that condemned him; it is not evil to be blessed with wealth. It was his lack of compassion that was his undoing. Like a rich fool, he had no eternal wealth and lost his soul to the deceitfulness of temporal wealth (cf. Luke 12:21, 33, 16:11).

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Wealthy in the Kingdom

This is the second of two consecutive teachings by Jesus about wealth (cf. the parable of the shrewd manager, verses 1–13). The first was about choosing which master to serve, God or money; the other is about choosing between selfishness and compassion. These follow a lengthy section of the Gospel containing parables and teachings on a variety of subjects that Jesus dispensed as His Passion loomed in front of Him. This set of parables in Luke 16 is directed at the Pharisees. The type of story has been called a “reversal” (also a double-edged parable) and makes use of a frequently used plot, multiple versions of which existed in Jesus’ time.

BIBLE APPLICATION

AIM: We will not allow selfishness to blind us to the
needs of others.

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BIBLE APPLICATION

Even in our churches, we often measure people by what they do, what they have, and who they know rather than their display of Christ-like character. This is not the way of the kingdom. We live in a self-centered, entertainment driven, over-stimulated world where we are raising a generation of young people who have no regard for the sacrifices made to enjoy the freedoms we have today. In striving for a better life, we have forgotten it was in our struggle that we banded together as a people and that this is the very foundation of our dignity—the heart of compassion to look at each other as brother and sister. This lesson reminds us that God does not want us to shut our eyes, close our ears, and cover our mouths when we see social injustices. We have a mandate from God to care for the poor, disenfranchised, and marginalized. In the end, God will see to it that those who honor the poor honor Him and will be richly rewarded.



STUDENT RESPONSES

AIM: : We will be eager to seek out ways to meet the needs of others.

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STUDENT RESPONSES

Pray and ask God how you can individually and corporately be an agent of change to provide for the poor. Begin to pray and intercede for those who have abundance to have a heart for God so that they come alongside to advance the kingdom through wise use of their resources. Seek out opportunities to be a blessing to someone in need and to not pass by someone on the street who is hungry or in need of clothes or shelter. As we give and share with the least of these, we do it as unto the Lord, and He is pleased. Examine how you can be proactive in helping to change the attitudes about the poor in your community and help young people to be sensitive to the needs of others. Go beyond your comfort zone to extend a helping hand.



Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

We praise you because you are a compassionate God. We thank you for showing us compassion and meeting our deepest need for a Savior. Lord, we ask that you give us the same compassion that You have. We pray that You help us to be ready to help others and meet the needs of those around us.

In Jesus' name we pray.

AMEN

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Next Sunday
February 4, 2024
Lesson 10
Hear and Do the Word

