



During this short series we're examining a number of passages from the gospels that expose something of the latent Pharisaism in many of our hearts, and then applying the glorious gospel afresh, as we're convicted of our need to trust Christ again. This week we looked at that parable that Jesus told of the Rich Man & Lazarus in Luke 16.

We began by thinking both corporately and individually about the link between what we care about, and what we spend our money on. We asked what would **your** bank statements tell us about what **you** love? We then examined the story that Jesus told, and looked at 4 principles for our giving and relationship with money. The reason we're considering these verses in this series is because of v13-15: The Pharisees Love Money.

### 2 very different men:

- 1) **Different experiences in life.** One man lives in extravagant luxury. He has a huge house, posh clothes and more than enough food. Whilst the other (probably because he's crippled) lies outside his gates, having his sores licked by unclean wild dogs.
- 2) **Named.** The surprise is the poor man is named: Lazarus. He's the only man in all of Jesus' stories to be named – his name means 'he whom God helps'. But it certainly doesn't look like it! – indeed it's almost as if Jesus has got it back to front. Surely the rich man is the one whom God has helped? Not the poor man. But no, the story is right – and we're set up for a reversal.
- 3) **Different experiences in the after-life.** We need to be careful as we're not meant to get our doctrine of the after-life from this account – Jesus is telling a story to make a point. And the point is the rich man had, despite having the law and prophets, not been obedient to God. Please do note it's not that he was wealthy (Abraham was wealthy), but that he had not been generous. The God who sits behind the law generously made provision for those who were poor (see Deut 15 for eg). He had lived for the now, not been obedient to God and so actually revealed that he never knew him. Lazarus is 'he whom God helped' and so welcomed to Abraham's side – likely a picture of feasting and celebration.

From the account we then drew out 4 principles by way of application:

1. **We're not to love money.** Whilst our knee-jerk reaction is that it ought to be the other way round – Pharisees look down on those who have money – which they may well do, actually here the opposite is true. And the reason they love money is

because it's 'externally assessable' & impressive. 'Money is just a way of keeping score' said Haroldson Hunt, an oil baron and presumably in the Pharisees eyes evidence of God's blessing due to a zealous and keen faith. Matthew 23v25 also highlights their internal greed & selfishness.

2. **We're to be obedient now, as this is not all there is.** The mantra of our culture, and the motto of the Rich Man would be 'eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die'. We're told to live for the now as the here & now is all there is. But it's not. There is a greater, more real future, to come. And so what we do now, matters then. Be obedient to God now. Living his way is the way of freedom.
3. **We're called to be generous.** The Rich Man was not. Despite living in pricey Oxford, these principles are still for us. They make us consider how we spend our money – what it is that we care about. There are numerous opportunities for generosity all around us – how are we doing at taking them?
4. **We have a generous God.** This is crucial: behind the Law that the Rich Man ignored is a generous God who looks after people, he lavishes his blessings on us. Blessings in his common grace in sunshine and ice-cream and friendship and laughter, but also in his grace shown in redeeming a people who have walked out on him. His extravagant generosity is shown in giving us what was most costly and precious to him. Reflection upon his grace in the gospel is what changes stingy hearts like ours.

Here are questions that might get things going, feel free to ignore / adapt for your group:

What should our relationship be with money? Should we give it all away and live as hermits?! Why? Why not?  
 What do you think your bank account would show that you loved most?  
 Why did the Pharisees love money?  
 What point was Jesus making in his story to them?  
 Why do you think he says they won't listen, even if someone from the dead warns them?

For each of 'the principles for giving,' ask

- a) do they apply to us
- b) how can we help each other grow in this area?

1. we're not to love money
2. we're to be obedient now as this is not all there is
3. we're called to be generous
4. we have a generous God.

How ought God's extravagant generosity shape our understanding of giving? Does it?

For info here are all the passages / topics we'll be considering / have considered...

...We build foundations upon what we do. (Matthew 7v24-29)

...We compare ourselves with others. (Luke 18v9-14).

...We love money. (Luke 16v13-31)

...We do not see our own sin. (Luke 7v36-47)

...We feel like slaves rather than sons. (Luke 15v1-2, 11-32)