

Week 02

Bible Passage
Luke 16:19–31 (Lent 4)



Sneak Peek

Jesus told a parable about two men who died, ending up at different destinations. In this lifetime, all of us have a chance to choose what that destination will be.

Helping the Helpless

Desired Outcomes

1. To study the parable Jesus told about a rich man and a poor man named Lazarus.
2. To explore the reasons the rich man and Lazarus went to different destinations.
3. To consider what Jesus taught about eternity and the choices we make in this life.

Session Key Verse

“If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.” —Luke 16:31

Optional Materials

- Internet access
- Drawing paper, colored pencils or markers
- *For free digital resources to enhance this lesson, go to www.warnerpress.org/life-mosaic-resources.*

1 *Get Acquainted*



Let's do a "Lent check-in." **Would you say you feel closer to Christ now than you did at the start of Lent this year? What activities from your personal life, church, or your group meetings have been impacting your spiritual life this Lenten season? If you can't think of any, why do you think that is?** Discuss your responses with a partner or with the whole group. Maybe you are in a difficult season of life where you are just trying to hang on. Maybe the areas where you need to grow aren't being addressed in church or in your group and will require some personal study to help you progress. **If you are feeling closer to Jesus, what does that look like for you? Where are things "clicking" for you?**

Today you are going to read a parable that is only found in the Gospel of Luke—the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

2 *Discover*



Read and discuss [Luke 16:19–31](#). The commentary section can be used to generate dialogue, or for study prior to your meeting.

Commentary

As much as we would like to spiritualize this parable, it is very difficult to explain away its central message, especially given what Luke's Gospel has to say elsewhere about money and possessions. The fates of these two individuals after death are very much tied to their experiences of wealth and poverty in this life.

The story centers on the reversal of fortunes that took place after Lazarus and the rich man died. It links agony or comfort after death with how we treat the less fortunate around us. Luke, in particular, stresses the way the status of the rich and the poor is reversed in the kingdom of God, and makes it clear that the poor were a focus of Jesus' ministry. In his inaugural sermon,

Jesus declared that he had been anointed “to bring good news to the poor” (4:18). Jesus admonished his followers not just to invite to their parties the friends and neighbors who could repay them, but to extend their invitations to “the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind” (14:13). This was echoed when Jesus described the kingdom of God as a wedding banquet where the invitation was ultimately extended to this same group of people (14:21).

The poor had good news preached to them, but the wealthy received a somewhat different message. The rich young ruler who asked Jesus how he could inherit eternal life was told to sell all he had and distribute the money to the poor. When this made him sad (because of his wealth), Jesus commented that the rich tend to have more difficulty entering



the kingdom of God (18:18–30). Like the rich fool, the wealthy store their treasure in ever larger barns they cannot take with them after they die (12:13–21). They may “store up treasures for themselves,” but they “are not rich toward God” (12:21). But being “rich toward God” is not just about piety; it is also about selling possessions and distributing wealth to the poor, as Zacchaeus did after he encountered Jesus (19:1–10). As the church emerged in Acts, new converts “would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need” (2:45; see also 4:32–35).

The story of the rich man and Lazarus might be difficult for many North Americans, whose lifestyle stands in sharp contrast with a majority of people in the world who live on much less. Like so much else that Luke says

about money and possessions, it stands as a stinging indictment not only of the great confidence we place in financial security, but also of the drastic inequities between rich and poor we allow to perpetuate.

Our temptation is to explain away a story like this and to remove its blatant depiction of how God will ultimately vindicate the cause of the poor. But the message has been clearly stated. Like the rich man's five brothers, we have been given all the warning we need.¹

Questions

- **What do you notice about the rich man? about Lazarus? Can you think of any other parable where someone was given a proper name? What might the significance of that be?**
- **What do you notice about how each of the deaths is described? How are the two after-death destinations described? What relationship did the rich man want to have with Lazarus after they had died? How did Abraham treat the rich man? Abraham said, "Those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so" (v 26). Who might want to "do so"?**
- The rich man was alone in Hades. Compare and contrast the relationships experienced by the rich man in life versus after death. Similarly, compare and contrast the relationships experienced by Lazarus in life versus after death.
- The rich man asking Lazarus to warn his family calls to mind Jacob Marley visiting Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*. (If possible, watch the scene; a version is available at www.warnerpress.org/life-mosaic-resources.) **Why would the rich man want Lazarus to warn his brothers like this? Why would the rich man have felt that Moses and the prophets weren't enough? What was Abraham's response?**

1. Adapted from "Commentary on Luke 16:19–31," accessed August 10, 2016, https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1784.



Option 1

As a group, put the rich man on trial. **What were his crimes according to the text? Were his sins overt, or were they sins of omission? Who might defend him? Who might accuse him? What might his household staff say about his character? How would his brothers describe him? What justification might the rich man give for his action (or inaction)? If he's found guilty, what punishment or restitution would you recommend? What would have to happen for the rich man's character to be genuinely changed, like Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*? What impact could he have then on his family?**



Option 2

Split into groups, with three or four persons per group. Using drawing paper and colored pencils or markers, work together in the groups to draw a picture of what the scene might have looked like as Abraham and Lazarus interacted with the rich man. **What information does the text *not* give us? What are we left wondering?** List your questions and “wonders” on the back of your picture and share them with the larger group.

4 Apply



Take a few moments to examine your thoughts and feelings about this passage. **Where does the passage challenge you? Is it the idea of hell or “Hades”?** Some people struggle with the concept of a loving and forgiving God sending anyone to eternal punishment. **Is it the idea of our choices today determining our eternal future? Is it the thought that we might be doing all the right things but still be in sin because of actions we are *not* taking? Are your concerns for your own choices in life or for those of someone dear to you? Are you frustrated for the rich man because no one will go plead with his brothers to turn their lives around?** Here is space to record your thoughts:

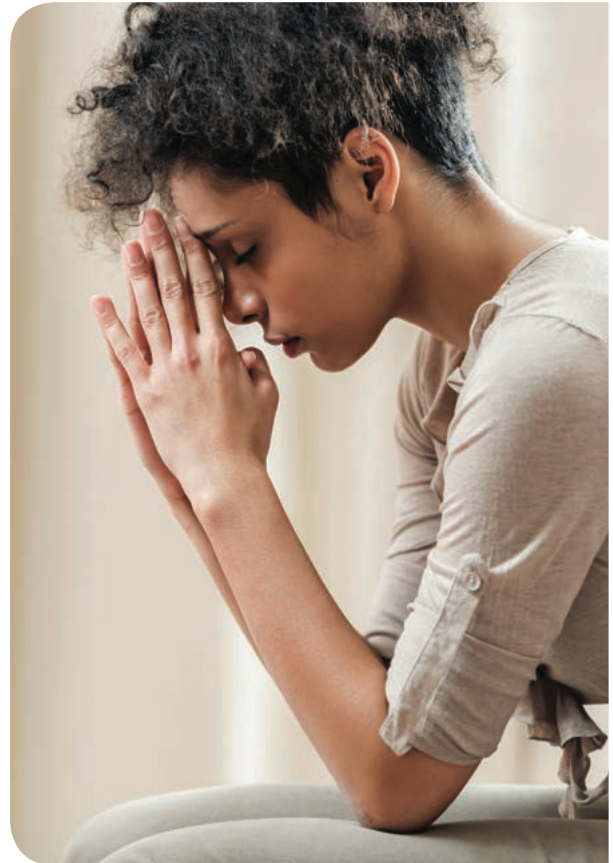
Share with a partner, or meditate alone if you prefer. Consider your anxieties over this passage. Think about your hope that God made a way to heaven through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Commit to praying for people in your life who may not yet know God.

5 Conclude



We are four weeks into the Lenten season. We have talked about being lost, found, and restored. Now, with the rich man and Lazarus, we have talked about choices that impact eternity. Abraham told the rich man that he and his brothers had everything they needed to know in order to do the right thing. We have all that they had, and more—we have the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Spend some time in quiet prayer or in written reflection. Ask God to show you where you might be missing something in your life of faith. Ask God how you should apply all of these lessons to your everyday life, for the glory of the kingdom. Ask God who might need you to show them the way or point them in the right direction.



Daily Bible Readings Week 2	<i>Sunday</i> Luke 16:19–31 <i>Helping the Helpless</i>	<i>Monday</i> Luke 17:1–10 <i>Sayings of Jesus</i>	<i>Tuesday</i> Luke 17:11–19 <i>Jesus Cleanses</i>
	<i>Wednesday</i> Luke 17:20–37 <i>The Coming of the Kingdom</i>	<i>Thursday</i> Luke 18:1–8 <i>A Widow and a Judge</i>	<i>Friday</i> Luke 18:9–17 <i>A Pharisee and a Tax Collector</i>

Notes
