

**Victory of the Lamb**  
**Pastor Ben Sadler**  
**Sermon series: The One**  
**Sermon theme: See the One**  
**Sermon text: Luke 16:19:31**

<sup>19</sup> “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. <sup>20</sup> At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores <sup>21</sup> and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

<sup>22</sup> “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup> In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. <sup>24</sup> So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’

<sup>25</sup> “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. <sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’

<sup>27</sup> “He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, <sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’

<sup>29</sup> “Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’

<sup>30</sup> “No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’

<sup>31</sup> “He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

Some things that I purchased in 2019 have no value in 2020. For example, I bought plane tickets for a pastor’s retreat in San Antonio that was supposed to take place in mid-April 2020. But those tickets had no value because of the pandemic. How about you? What things did you purchase in 2019 that have no value in 2020?

Jesus tells us something similar about the age to come. Some things that have value in this age will have no value in the age to come. Some things that are important in this world will not be important in the world to come.

One of those things is money. Money is good and has value in this age, but it will have no value in the age to come. That is the basic idea of Luke 16. Luke 16 has two parables that both begin with the phrase, “there was a certain rich man...” These parables speak about blessing of riches and the challenges. We are finishing up our sermon series called **The One**. Last week Pastor Bill preached on the first parable in Luke 16 called the “shrewd manager”.

Do you remember what it was about? Jesus says that there was a dishonest manager who cut deals with his master’s money so that when he was fired, he would be welcomed by his new friends. And Jesus says that we should imitate this kind of person. We shouldn’t imitate their dishonesty but their shrewdness.

Jesus said, **For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.** In other words, the people of this world are more ambitious and work harder to gain something that doesn't matter than Christians who have something of eternal value.

Then Jesus makes this application, <sup>9</sup> **I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.** In other words, wealth is a good thing that we should use right now to gain friends and further God's kingdom because soon it will be gone and have no value. And when it is gone in the age to come, we will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. So wealth is a temporary tool to further God's kingdom and serve people.

Then Jesus has further teachings about the importance of managing our money, which is of little eternal value, to gain something even greater of eternal value: <sup>10</sup> **Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.** <sup>11</sup> **So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?** <sup>12</sup> **And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?**

So be faithful in using money that has no value in the age to come so that God can entrust you with true eternal riches.

Then Jesus makes a comment that might seem out of context: He says, <sup>13</sup> **No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."**

What Jesus is saying is, "Money is a good servant but a terrible master. Money is a good thing. But when we make good things ultimate things it will destroy us."

Jesus was primarily speaking all of this to all the sinners who just became his disciples. But there was another group that was listening in. The Pharisees. The religious professionals. Moments ago, in Luke 15 they were grumbling because Jesus welcomed sinners and ate with them. Now look at their reaction to Jesus' words on money: <sup>14</sup> **The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus.**

The religious people had used their godliness as a means for financial gain. They used their position as leaders in the community to gain more wealth and money and power for themselves. And they tried to use God's Word to back up their greed. So Jesus responded:

<sup>15</sup> **He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight.**

Jesus was trying to get their attention. He could see that these religious people had disordered priorities. They had turned money and power into their god. But I don't think it's only the Pharisees who trust in money and power. I think all of us can take a good thing like money and make it an ultimate thing. And Jesus doesn't want us to set our hearts on something that has no lasting value in the age to come.

So Jesus is going to tell a story to get our attention. We might not agree with Jesus so far. We might not see our greed. So Jesus tells a story.

Now the story Jesus is going to tell is very similar to Charles Dickens "A Christmas Carol". Do you know that story? It is about a greedy business owner named Scrooge. He trusts in money as his god. And he greed keeps him from using money as a tool.

So on Christmas Eve night he is visited by the ghost of his partner Jacob Marley. And Jacob Marley's ghost is in chains because of all of the wicked, dishonest dealings he made. He told Scrooge that this night he would be visited by three ghosts. The ghost of Christmas past. The ghost of Christmas present. And the ghost of Christmas future.

The ghost of Christmas past takes Scrooge back to his youth when he left his fiancé to pursue his business and make money. He already was filled with greed.

Then the ghost of Christmas present took Scrooge to see how ill his employee's son Tiny Tim was. And how he rejected the invitation of his family to celebrate Christmas because he wanted to make more money.

And the ghost of Christmas future takes Scrooge to his own funeral, where only a few people show up to make sure he is really dead. And then Scrooge sees his abandoned gravestone, and realizes that all his greed is leading him to a lonely grave. And he cries out in horror.

Jesus is trying to bring us to some of the same conclusions with this parable. This parable that he is telling us is not supposed to teach us all the details about death and heaven and hell. It is supposed to lead us to an emotional response. Let's dive into the story.

**<sup>19</sup> "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. <sup>20</sup> At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores <sup>21</sup> and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.**

The rich man is supposed to resemble the religious leaders who thought that their riches was proof of God's approval. This rich man is so consumed by his riches that he doesn't recognize the poor man, Lazarus who longs to be fed by the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table. But only the stray dogs have pity on him.

**<sup>22</sup> "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup> In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. <sup>24</sup> So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'**

This is a parable, so we shouldn't use this story to describe what we know about heaven and hell and the life to come. All these points are deeply symbolic. Lazarus is taken to "Abraham's side". Abraham was known as the patriarch of all the Jews. The Father all of the blessings of God. So poor Lazarus is taken to the place of blessing and honor and privilege. And the rich man is taken to Hades. The rich man has become the beggar and calls out to Abraham to symbolically get what falls from Lazarus' table.

**<sup>25</sup> "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. <sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'**

Remember this is a parable. Jesus is not teaching the if you are poor and have bad things that in heaven you are rich. And if you are rich, in heaven you will be poor. Jesus wants us to feel the emotion of the reversal of the status of Lazarus and the Rich man. He wants us to feel the emotion of the finality of the situation. The rich man had his chance. But now his time is up and there is no going back.

Jesus is doing what Charles Dickens did in the Christmas Carol. He is taking all of us Scrooges to our grave and showing us where greed and self-centeredness will lead us. He is trying to get our attention.

Here is what Jesus is teaching us to know as we look at the two parables in Luke 16. In other words, money is a good thing. Jesus says, use money to make friends of God so that in the age to come you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. But don't become so obsessed with money that you no longer use it as a tool for the kingdom. In other words...

### **1. Use wealth to make eternal friends. Don't use friends to make temporary wealth.**

We all have money. We are all rich compared to the vast majority of the people in the world. You don't need to renounce your riches. You don't need to become Lazarus. You just need to begin to see him. See the value of human beings. Your money is temporary, but human are eternal. Use your temporal money and power and influence to have an impact on an eternal being.

But how do we do that? How do we keep this mindset of seeing the One in our lives, seeing Lazarus? Jesus shows us on the last lines of his parable. The rich man makes one last request from hell:

**<sup>27</sup> "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, <sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'**

**<sup>29</sup> "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'**

**<sup>30</sup> "'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'**

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The Pharisees no longer read the word of God and followed it. The Pharisees twisted the Word of God to justify their greed and selfish actions. They no longer trembled at the Word but used their religion as a means to financial gain.

In Jesus' parable, Father Abraham says that we have Moses and the Prophets, the Word of God, let's listen to them. Listening is not just letting sound waves enter into our ears. Listening means following and obeying.

So how can we not let money become our master? How can we learn to use money to further God's kingdom and reach the one? How can we begin to see Lazarus?

### **2. Don't just hear God's Word. Do what it says.**

Let's get real practical. When Jesus says, use worldly wealth to gain friends, so that when it is gone you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. Let's do that. Let's use our money to build friendships with our neighbors. Let's be hospitable. Let's look for opportunities to win their hearts to Jesus.

When the Bible says feed the poor, let's feed the poor. Let's not talk about it or discuss it. Let's do what it says.

At the end of the Christmas Carol, Scrooge is crying out in agony for how he wasted his life on greed and self-centeredness. He calls out to Christmas future, I repent, I repent. And he falls on his grave. The next scene is Scrooge waking up and it's Christmas day. His life isn't over. He doesn't have to continue to live in greed and self-centeredness. He was shown grace. So he begins to laugh and dance. He gives his money to the poor. Helps Tiny Tim. He sees his money as a tool to bless others and further the kingdom of God's love.

Let's wake up. The parable of the Rich man and poor Lazarus doesn't have to be our story. We can live our lives in view of eternity. Just like the pandemic has made many things worthless, so in the age to come, our money will be useless. Money is temporary, but humans are eternal. Let's use our money now to serve, support, and rich the One. Let's make eternal friendships, so that when this age is over, the One God has put in our lives will welcome us into eternal dwellings. Amen.