

Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)



There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

Then 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.'

But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'

Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'

Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'

And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'

But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

THE TEACHINGS OF THE PARABLE:

- This life on earth is a preparation for the eternal life after the death of the body. Jesus Christ shows us that the **particular judgment** is awaiting all of us after death, on the basis of which everyone will receive their reward: **eternal happiness in Heaven** (*the bosom of Abraham*), or **eternal torment** (*in torments*).
- God is Loving and Good with all people, but He is also a Righteous Judge: He rewards everyone based on how they have used the gifts received. That is why we are all required to use all the opportunities we have in this life to gain salvation or reward in the eternal life.

- It is not one's wealth or poverty that determines his fate in the eternal life, but **how he has acquired** and **how he has used (how he has managed)** his **material wealth** or **poverty**: with love for others or with indifference towards them. After death, no one can take anything with them from what they had on earth; each person takes with himself only what he has given through good deeds and almsgiving: the gratitude and love of those whom he has helped.
- By using his **material wealth exclusively for his own personal benefit**, the rich man has ignored the needs of his fellow humans, thereby contributing to the creating the impassable chasm between him and his fellows; this chasm will torment him in eternal life. The soul of the rich man is as full of sores as it's the body of Lazarus: selfishness, faithlessness, greed of all kinds, pride, arrogance, unbelief and indifference towards God's judgment, hardening of the heart (lack of mercy towards the fellows in distress). Through these the rich man **flattered himself that his wealth would last indefinitely**, and therefore he kept and deepened the distance between himself and Lazarus. The man rich in wealth was in fact a spiritually poor man: he showed no gratitude for the gifts received from God in his life, and he did not care to gather anything for his soul.
- Poor Lazarus, through faith in God and trust in His love, endured all griefs and sufferings, all indifference and humiliation from the rich man; he **understood that all his poverty was temporary** (it would end one day, through the mercy of God), and therefore all **his crying and desire were aimed at acquiring imperishable goods**: the goodness of the heart, the mercy, the forgiveness, non-judgement of the rich man for his lack of mercy, hope in God. The man lacking wealth was in fact a spiritually rich man: he was grateful to God for the gift of the present life, and through good deeds he gathered spiritual wealth for the eternal life.
- Whoever in this life contributes to the deepening of the **chasm** between him and the others through lack of love / indifference, prepares himself for the life after death an unpassable chasm between himself and God's Heaven. Being the God of Love, Jesus Christ urges us to do works of **mercy, compassion and brotherly love for all people**, in order to spend eternity in Heaven (the "bosom of Abraham", of Love, of living together with God and his saints), and not in hell, the place of torment due to deprivation and loneliness.
- After death, the soul has the **ability to know (recognize) other people and see the rewards / punishments they received from God**, but it will not be able to partake the heavenly rewards deserved by others or to alleviate the sufferings of those in hell. Through this God shows His Justice and His maximum earnestness when He asks us to love one another in this life - He Himself demonstrates His love.
- **The rich man is without name**, to show that those who do not fulfill the commandment of love are not recognized by God as His sons, He does not know them personally. (Psalm 15: 4, "*I will not take up their names on my lips*"). The name of the poor (Lazarus = "God has helped me") shows that God remembers him and recognizes him as His Son, knows him personally, because love towards God and men is in his heart.

METHODOLOGICAL GUIDANCE:

- expressive narration of the parable by the teacher;
- the teachings of the parable are extracted through heuristic conversation;
- illustrative stories;