

Jesus has finished teaching his disciples how “sons and daughters of the light” use earthly wealth.

His point is simple.

Wealth will rot.

Bodies will die.

But “Sons and daughters of light, don’t live for or by those things.

They look to and live for God.

They have treasure that never fades nor fail,

Use, then, what dies and rots to make eternal friends

Use earthly wealth to

make disciples,

train disciples

Support, feed and clothe disciples...

Spend that which rots on those who never die.

Jesus sums up in v.13

“No servant can serve two masters, for either he’ll hate the one and love the other, or he’ll be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

The way a person uses his or her wealth reveals spiritual life or spiritual death.

“Sons and daughters of the world” use wealth to secure good things for themselves here and now.

Their view is circumscribed to the 80-100 years before death

Money becomes master because attaining those things upon which they’ve set their hearts,

Vacations

Homes

Cars

Early retirement

Whatever it might be

They must have money. The thought of spending it on a missionary, or a church or giving it to buy someone else groceries or paying their bills...

Madness

That's giving away your life.

But if your heart is hidden with Christ in God...you can spend it, give it.

Money isn't your master, it's your servant.

You use it for the one who bought you and loves you

Now Jesus is speaking to his disciples

But the Pharisees are still hanging around

And when Jesus says: you cannot serve both God and money.

They sneer:

[14]The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him.

Now Pharisees strictly adhere to their religious disciplines

They fast twice a week

tithe everything, even their spices,

How can it be said that they love money?

The Pharisees teach that wealth reveals character...

But for them it was not how you use it but whether you have it.

God rewards the faithful with money and health.

They looked to Abraham

the father of Israel

The model of faithfulness
And fabulously rich
The Pharisees considered his prosperity God's reward for
his righteousness
And they reasoned if you are faithful, you will be rewarded
with prosperity
If you are wicked, you'll be sick and impoverished.
And so the Pharisees loved their money
They loved to display it
They loved people to see it...look at how God has rewarded
me.
And they used it to indulge in all the pleasures and
comforts of the world
Their theology became a self-deceiving cloak
You could hoard up piles of stuff and the stuff itself tells
you that you are righteous.
Prosperity gospel.
The teaching was widely embraced
when Jesus said: it's easier for a camel to get through the
eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into heaven.
How did his disciples respond?
Who then can be saved?
They were shocked.
This is yet another way the Pharisees' regulations obscured
the law of God
The OT could not be clearer.
God commands the rich to give to the poor, the widow, the
orphan, to support the weak.

The prophets excoriated Israelite nobility for fattening themselves while the people starved.

And the Pharisees do the very same things

But they can't see it

They can't be convicted of their sin and repent

Because they shield themselves from the illuminating light of God's word by their false teaching.

Their theology of wealth cements their blindness.

All the Pharisee has to do to reassure himself about his righteousness is count his money

Pharisees added to the word of God to obscure it

The contemporary churchgoer subtracts from it

What do you mean I can't do this or have that or be here.

God loves me and wants me to be happy and this makes me happy

But the scriptures say

Well that was written a long time ago.

Who really understands what it means anyway.

And just like the Pharisee...the modern churchgoer escapes conviction

Never sees his need to repent and be forgiven.

So prosperity is the result of virtue.

Impoverishment the result of sin

The disciples see a man born blind, they ask: who sinned, this man or his parents?

Why ask that?

God punishes the wicked with calamity.

Why pity the poor and the sick?

They deserve it.

let them die.

I'm getting what I deserve because of my virtue, she's getting what she deserves because of her wickedness.

This also isn't some strange foreign way of thinking.

I'm successful because I work hard. The poor are poor because they're lazy.

So let em starve.

A non-believing woman recently wrote a letter to a prominent preacher.

I'm a doctor, I've devoted my life helping people.

I've worked hard to get where I am.

I was treating a woman, a former addict

Poor

several illegitimate children,

she'd just started going to church,

She tells *me* I'm a sinner

I need to repent

Or I'm going to hell

So I go to hell because I don't believe in Jesus

While she, a drug addled mother goes to heaven

Her wasted life forgiven.

All because of Jesus

...it was an offense.

Sadly the pastor used her letter as an example of how the church was getting it wrong.

Offending too many "good" people like this doctor with talk of judgment and sin and the need for repentance

But the doctor was not offended by the church.

It's the gospel.

The gospel always offends the self righteous who use their wealth, their success, even their religious practice to cloak their need for forgiveness.

If the gospel doesn't offend the self righteous, you're preaching it wrong.

The offense felt by the doctor mirrors the offense Pharisees took when Jesus, accompanied by tax collectors and prostitutes...says to them: repent, turn to me, or perish.

Me

Here you are surrounded by scum and I need to repent?

So all of that lies behind their sneering

Jesus responds in v.15-18...the entirety of which can be summed up in v.15

[15]"You're those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what's exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God."

God sees through your works

He knows your heart. You may deceive yourself and others

God's not deceived.

The law, the word of God, that you've ignored and obscured by your regulations and false theology

It remains.

It's not void.

It will condemn you in the end unless you repent.

To make that point clear, he tells a parable.

[19]"There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day."

The man is extraordinarily wealthy.

Wealthy people wore wool clothing processed by a fuller to produce bright white garments.

Most people wore unwhitened untreated wool.

You'd notice a rich person in a crowd by his white garments.

The extremely wealthy had their wool whitened then dyed in a rare purple dye extracted from the murex rock snail

Few apart from high aristocracy could afford it

“fine linen” refers to expensive white linen imported from Egypt...high thread count.

This man is swimming in money

Note

“was clothed” is an imperfect verb,

That is he was *continuously* was clothed in purple and fine linen.

Not just one outfit.

And he feasts every day, sumptuously

The highest quality food...in abundance...every day.

feasting was a means of establishing status.

When you hold a feast, everyone you invite is indebted to you.

The Pharisees were always giving and attending feasts.

Giving favors and returning them.

This man feasted sumptuously every day.

He's was always the host

Others are always in his debt

He's at the top of the pecking order.

Where a host seats you reflects your social standing in his eyes.

This gives the host a lot of power.

Since this man's always the host...he's perpetually in the power position..raising one up, setting another down.

Everyone curries his favor.

To the Pharisees, this man's righteousness is beyond.

He's as rich as Abraham

Traditionally he's named: Divies, "rich"

In real life his name would be known and revered by all
Jesus leaves him nameless

Now

[20]at his gate

πυλών, usually reserved for castle or palace gates

20was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores...

He's been "laid" there

Someone's carried him.

He's unable to move

Lame, perhaps, or paralyzed.

And whoever carried him was apparently disgusted by the task...

"laid" is βάλλω...throw

He was thrown down at the gate

The disgust would follow from his being covered with sores.

If he's paralyzed...these are perhaps bedsores

He can't turn himself

No one turns him....

The sores are infected, festering, and spreading over his body. .

He's unclean.

He's poor, lame, covered with sores, unclean.

And he's starving.

He

[21]...desired (ἐπιθυμέω, lust) to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table."

Great feasts were held in the center courtyard of great estates

From the gate,...Lazarus would see able to see the feasting smell the food.

Every day.

There were two types of bread served fresh bread for eating

And older stale bread...there's no paper napkins. Cloth is expensive

So you use stale bread as a napkin

And then throw it on the ground.

Why?

Ancient cities were filthy...no sanitation services.

There were dogs.

Not cute labs fru fru yapping dogs

scavenging dogs running throughout the city and living off the refuse.

After a feast, you'd open the gates, they'd come in and eat bread that fell from the table

Lazarus lusted for that bread.

These same dogs...

licked his sores.

We think, awww, at least the dogs care...

No, these are scavengers, not pets.
Think rather of vultures or hyenas, carrion, picking at a wound.

To the pharisaic mind,
This is divine retribution.
poverty, paralysis, his open sores, starvation
All proof of the man's wickedness.
But note, Jesus gives him a name. That's unusual in parables.

Lazarus is from Eliazar: one helped by God.
The Pharisees may've thought it funny,
A poodle named spike
The rich man believes he needs no helper.
He trusts in himself.
Jesus gives him no name.
But Lazarus.
No friends
No food,
no strength,
No health
But God is his helper.
Blessed are the poor in Spirit...
no matter how healthy, prosperous and respectable,
Do you know that before God you are
sick, lame, powerless...
If so, you're blessed, you are poor in Spirit
Only those who see this and know this throw themselves
down at the foot of the cross of Christ
And when you do...

And God is your helper.

And so

[22]The poor man died

Lazarus' body, would be thrown into gehennah...the trash dump outside of Jerusalem to be consumed by worms and fire,

But Lazarus himself

“is carried by the angels to Abraham's side.”

Κόλπος - chest, lap.

This would be a shock.

At the great heavenly feast

Abraham's in the place of honor.

And there's Lazarus, not merely seated next to him...but at his chest or lap, like a child.

Remember John laid his head on Jesus' chest at the last supper...

that's the image here.

Lazarus is a beloved child of Abraham.

Some have said this parable is about the virtue of poverty.

That God grants the poor some kind of justifying grace.

But Lazarus is at *Abraham's* chest

Abraham was a rich man.

The wealthy and poor are together at this feast.

It's not what you have but who you trust.

Abraham believed God and **it was counted** it to him as righteousness(Gen15:6)

And so did Lazarus

As Paul writes: "...the words "it was counted to him" were not written for [Abraham's] sake alone, [24]but for ours also.

It[rihteuosness] will be counted to us who believe in him who

raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, [25]who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

(Romans4:23-25)

When you turn from yourself and trust in Jesus Christ, his righteousness is counted as yours.

His blood washes away your sins

you're seated not only with Abraham, but with Christ

Every prostitute

Porn addict

Drug dealer

Homosexual

Adulterer

Thief

abuser

Murderer

And

Pharisee

who repents and turns to Jesus Christ

But for those who rely on themselves...

The rich man also died and was buried...

His funeral would be magnificent.

His eulogy delivered by the most important rabbi

death mourned by thousands.

But it's all rot

[23]...in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and

Lazarus at his side.

“Hades” may refer to hell or the place of the dead

Either way, in hades...the rich man is in torment.

It's in vogue to say: fear can't convert.

Never use hell to lead people to heaven.

Some do manipulate people to obey through fear of hell.

Persuasion of that sort, like all human persuasion fails.

But, “faith comes through hearing and hearing by the word of Christ”(Rom10:17)

And his word includes the truth about the terrible judgment coming to all those who refuse to repent and trust in Jesus Christ

Does a loving God send people to hell?

yes.

God is love(1Jhn4) so he saves sinners who repent.

And hell exists because God just and those who do not repent will be punished.

Your sins are either borne by Jesus on the cross...or you will bear them.

This image of hell is full, clear, terrifying.

That's Jesus' purpose.

He takes no pleasure in your fear

He takes pleasure in your salvation.

Heaven rejoices when a sinner repents

So Jesus preaches about the torment awaiting the unrepentant.

How dare we think such preaching beneath us.

torment.

There's no way to soften that word.

It refers to a deep, conscious unrelieved, unrelievable pain.

You know in hell that you deserve to be there...there's no cry of "injustice" on the man's lips

He's alone with the searing consciousness of his guilt forever

Hope drives you forward through the difficult times.

There's no hope here.

no escape...

What a warning.

Here are these sneering, self satisfied, arrogant men.

They hate Jesus.

They want him dead.

But Jesus never stops preaching to them.

never stops warning them.

never stops confronting them

He loves them.

Jesus would be just as hated today, he is.

Not the fluffy shiny Jesus

The real Jesus who preached about hell and repentance and forgiveness.

This parable would be heard as an intolerant, narrow minded extremism

His offer of forgiveness...met with sneers...forgiven for what...we're not doing anything wrong.

But he's God

and God is love

Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

That means you

And me.

He does that by revealing your sin

And its consequence
And then and holding out his pierced hands and side.
Come to me, he says
Lame, paralyzed, eaten by sin and death...come to me.
Prostitutes and Pharisees
Baby murderers and CEO's
My blood is sufficient for you
Repent, forsake yourself, I will heal you, clean you and
carry you to my banquet table.