

Daily Discipleship

Luke 16:19-31

Discipleship: *A New Messenger*

Focus Question: *How do we stay open to the message of Jesus?*

word of life

“He said to him, ‘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 (NRSV)

Read Luke 16:19-31

Jesus addresses the Pharisees in his parable of the rich man and Lazarus. In Luke 16:14, the Pharisees are described as “lovers of money.”

1. *What does it mean to be a “lover of money?”*
2. *What is the danger of loving money?*

In the parable, Jesus describes a rich man who is dressed in the finest of clothing, including the color purple and fine linen. Every day is a bountiful feast. Yet, outside his gate lies a poor man covered with sores. This poor man is willing to eat the crumbs and leftovers from the rich man’s daily feast. Instead of being filled with food, this poor man is ignored. The only care the poor man receives is from dogs which care for him by licking his sores.

3. *How do you envision this scene? Describe it.*
4. *Why might the rich man ignore the poor man?*
5. *Is it easier to ignore a poor person with no name, story, or information? How so?*

This is the only parable to have names for the characters. But note the rich man is left nameless. This is a reversal of the common practice for the rich and famous to have their names well-known, but the poor to remain nameless. Here, the poor man is identified as Lazarus meaning “God is my help.”

6. *Why is it helpful to have a name associated with the poor man?*
7. *How important is it to be known by someone by name?*

When Lazarus dies, he is carried away by angels to be with Abraham. The rich man dies and ends up in Hades, a place of torment. Part of the torment includes being able to see poor Lazarus with Abraham. In pain, the rich man calls for Abraham to send Lazarus to give him comfort as if Lazarus is his servant. Instead of providing comfort, Abraham offers a lesson about the chasm between heaven and hell.

Abraham reminds the rich man of all the good he had in life, but now he would suffer for eternity. Although this reversal of fortune is not favorable to the rich man, it is very good for the poor man who suffered greatly on earth. What shocking news! The Pharisees and others believed prosperity on this earth is an indicator of God’s blessing. Yet what good news for the poor to hear their bad fortune on earth might not continue after death?

8. *What surprises you about this story?*
9. *Jesus often tells troubling parables for his listeners. How is this parable troubling?*

For the first time in the parable, the rich man shows compassion and wants Lazarus to warn his five brothers. He does not want them to experience his pain. Abraham is quite practical in his response. If the pain and hunger of Lazarus was ignored when he was outside their home, why would anyone in the family pay attention to him – even if he came back from the dead?

10. *By the end of the parable, what feelings do you have?*

word among us

Today. . .It is a gift.

Today. . .It is not forever.

It is tempting to believe our life on this earth will continue forever. It is easy to mistake today for eternity.

1. *As you ponder eternity, what aspects of this life do you hope are part of heaven?*
2. *How often do you think about life beyond the grave?*
3. *What are your questions about heaven?*

The parable told by Jesus to the Pharisees would have been a wake-up call. The rich man's sin was not his wealth but his lack of compassion for those in need. He was so consumed with himself, he could not see anything beyond himself. Yet, he is nameless on this earth and left to be tormented forever.

4. *To whom do you relate in this parable?*
5. *Is it fair for the wealthy to automatically get prosperity in heaven?*
6. *Is it fair for the poor to automatically get a spot in heaven near Abraham?*

Once more, Jesus turns things upside down. Prosperity on this earth does not guarantee eternal life nor does it prevent it. Jesus wants people in relationships – with God, himself, others, and especially the poor. The love of money can blind people of all ages to the hurts of those in need. This parable pulls people from complacency and challenges the status quo.

7. *What helps us to hear and respond to the poor?*
8. *Why don't we do more to extend compassion to those in need?*
9. *What is the responsibility of the rich to the poor?*

The rich man hopes by sending Lazarus to his family, they will hear the message about God and justice. Hopefully, their lives will be transformed. It is possible for a resurrected man to draw some attention, but for how long? There is a certain irony in this, seeing Jesus will rise from the dead, but not all will listen to him.

10. *What person who has died would you like to have a conversation with?*
11. *What would you ask?*
12. *What person would you want to come back and talk to our country at this time?*
13. *How can we better listen to Jesus?*
14. *How can we better listen to the poor?*

Prayer

Jesus, open our eyes and ears to the poor. Show us ways to walk with those who have less and be open to your lessons as we serve. Fill us with humility and grace. Amen

Dig Deeper

Amos 6:1-7

last word

This week, find time to go
through your closets
and donate from your abundance.
to those in need.

