

## **Living with the End in Mind**

### **Luke 16:19-31**

#### **Intro**

**v19-21 - setting up the scene**

**v22 - the fate of us all**

**v 23-26 - the tables are turned**

**v 27-31 - we already know what we need to know**

#### **Mary's Song**

**Luke 1:46 And Mary said,**

**“My soul magnifies the Lord,**

**Luke 1:47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,**

**Luke 1:48 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.**

**Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;**

**Luke 1:49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.**

**Luke 1:50 His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.**

**Luke 1:51 He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.**

**Luke 1:52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;**

**Luke 1:53 he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.**

**Luke 1:54 He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,**

**Luke 1:55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”**

Intro to self. (Vineyard, Leah, hospital, jail)

Today we are looking at what Jesus has to say about money, power and influence.

How it can be used for good or for evil.

How it's effects can last into eternity even.

And if we are seeking to listen to God about money, power and influence, some direction on how to live now.

Money, power and influence.... Three resources that hold sway in our world today, much as they did in the first century Roman Empire.

Is there anyone in the news these days who you think is motivated by these three resources in any way?

Is there anyone in this room who is anxious about who in this country wields the resources of money, power and influence? Any of you scared about how those resources are going to be used for better or worse over the next few years?

Are you motivated by money, power and influence? Are you anxious about your finances? Do you enjoy positions of influence at work, in the community, in the church....? Do you enjoy influencing others... in meetings, on facebook, in your family?

Sometimes it seems to me, we take these assets for granted, especially here in a relatively safe, affluent society...

Did you ever wonder for instance, why money ever came into existence in the first place? I mean it wasn't in the original creation blueprint that we see in genesis.

Briefly, originally money didn't even exist. People in communities had specialities... maybe you are a cattle farmer, and you are a wheat grower. You have a lot of cows but you want to make bread.

So you walk one of your cows down the road to YOU and make a deal....  
One cow for 200 sacks of wheat... OK? Deal And everyone was happy.

This worked for a while, and oh how simple life must have seemed in some ways.

But then people started traveling far and wide... to China for instance, and they discovered silk and spices. And wanted to trade for those. But.... it's hard to transport 1 cow and 200 sacks of wheat in a boat to China. So we had to come up with another system... where you create something... let's call it money, to represent goods, and it's far more transportable than cows and wheat, and so trade developed.

And as trade developed and became more complex over time, the ability to hoard "money" and guard it, and manipulate others through trade grew, and money became a source of power and influence over others.

Those with more money had more power.

Those with less money had less power.

Gaps in power, and influence grew. The sophistication of how we trade grew. And here we are today... where instead of being a means to simplify life and trade, money and its accumulation is now the goal of life for many. Instead of being a tool, money has become our master.

**Money was created, or at least it was intended, to serve people.**

**Now we see that money is almost synonymous with power.**

**We see how it corrupts, intimidates and is one of the major sources of anxiety in America today.**

So how on earth did we get from that to where we are today... ?

I don't know about you, but I feel like money and power do not always ease my life, do not always serve me or others, but rather there's a continual

temptation for me to serve it, to orient my life and decisions around it and it feels like it adds stress and un-ease to my life...

In our world, money, power and influence have become more important than the people they were created to serve.

Something is not right.

Today we'll focus on one of Jesus' hardest hitting stories about the topic of money, power and influence

PRAY

This story comes in Luke's account of Jesus' life and ministry, straight after Jesus' words:

"You can't serve two masters, you can't serve God and money"

**Luke 16:19-31**

***Luke 16:19 ¶ "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.***

***Luke 16:20 And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores,***

***Luke 16:21 who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores.***

***Luke 16:22 The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried.***

***Luke 16:23 In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.***

***Luke 16:24 He called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.'***

***Luke 16:25 But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony.***

***Luke 16:26 Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.'***

***Luke 16:27 He said, 'Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house—***

***Luke 16:28 for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.'***

***Luke 16:29 Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.'***

***Luke 16:30 He said, 'No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'***

***Luke 16:31 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.'"***

-this is a parable and most parables are stories designed to vividly make a main point. The main point of this story is to think about the dynamics of power, money and resources and the eternal perspective that God has on such things.

Before we dig in, let's be clear : this is not primarily a teaching about hell. And Jesus is not giving a policy statement on the nature of hell here. In fact he uses vivid pictures of judgment that were common at the time (fire) to indicate that God judges the behavior indicated. It's worth remembering that in Jesus' time there were concepts of afterlife, being with God after death or being in shadows after death, but judgment, often depicted by fire, was generally reserved for the prophets condemning the injustice or oppressive behavior of groups of people (more often than not religious groups of people who said they spoke for God). So with the picture of fire here, the original listeners would likely have associated - "there's a judgment on this behavior" rather than "someone was literally burning in hell, what a mean God"

So, please don't get hung up on this image of fire.... it's in there to alert the

listener to a sense of God is angry about this, pay attention.

And if you want to discuss hell more, I would recommend it as a lunch time topic of conversation - don't be afraid to talk about it!

So let's look at this story and how Jesus uses it to teach us about money, power and influence.

**v19-21, the initial description of the scene.**

***Luke 16:19 ¶ “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.***

***Luke 16:20 And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores,***

***Luke 16:21 who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores.***

In v 19 Jesus describes the rich man, whose name we are never told, I think to underline the fact that this man's identity comes from his richness, and maybe to say “this man is every man, all of us”.

And rich he is: dressed in purple which in Jesus' culture was a color associated with the rich or royal because purple dye was more expensive than other colors, this man is dressed in fine linen and apparently has huge and sumptuous feasts not only on special occasions, but every, single day. Can you imagine sitting down to the most exquisite, extravagant food, with expensive wine and exclusive desserts, dressed in your most special clothes EVERY SINGLE day?

Then Jesus goes on in v 20-21 to describe a poor man who lies at the gate of this rich man's house, but this time we are told the man's name. His name is Lazarus, and immediately, as Jesus introduces this character by name, the listener is asked to identify and empathise with him. Names in this culture were meaningful, personal and a description of the character of

the person... Lazarus means, "God has helped", and so Jesus already in these first few lines of the story, is setting up a strange and confusing situation for the listener, because as he describes Lazarus' life, it sounds very far from someone whom "God has helped".

This poor man Lazarus, is not only poor, but Jesus tells us he is covered with sores, all over his body. This man is desperately hungry and not only is in constant pain from the open sores all over his body, but can see through the gates to the daily, extravagant feast of the rich man, and is desperate to quell the nagging, painful empty stomach with some food that regularly falls off the rich man's table as he eats himself into oblivion. And as if to round off the picture, Jesus underlines the situation by saying that wandering dogs walk by and lick Lazarus's' open sores. (Imagine)  
I feel like Jesus was making a bad movie here - over the top, but... it's meant to be

Could Jesus have described a more stark and sobering contrast. Jesus has used extremes, hyperbole, he's gone above and beyond to illustrate the scene here, because he wants the picture to stick in our minds and teach us from its boldness.

Jesus clearly and vibrantly illustrates how money and power, or lack thereof, can set up huge divides in our human society, divides which are marked by

some who have much and some who have little,  
some who are comfortable, and some who suffer  
some who have power, and some who feel powerless,  
Some who rule and some who don't

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Money and power have become something that **divide** us from one another.

Money and power can **torment** those without it, like Lazarus and

Money and power can **cushion** those with it (like the rich man) to a degree where they are oblivious to the needs of others around them. (REPEAT)\*\*\*

*How is this playing out given our political climate?*

*Do you feel exposed and tormented by money and power, or cushioned by it? (This is not a trick question)*

*Or both?*

*If you had to identify the “rich man” in America today, who would it be?*

*Lazarus?*

PAUSE

**But the story takes an unexpected turn in v 22:**

***The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried.***

Something happens to both men alike: They die.

The great equalizer of all humanity, death, befalls each character in this story, and already, in the way Jesus describes their death, we see that fortunes are about to turn.

The poor man dies and is carried off by angels to Abraham.

Abraham would be a familiar name to those listening to Jesus, even though to many of us he is not. Abraham was the great father of the Jewish people, the patriarch of the faith... a hero of the Jewish people whom God called a long time ago to go out and follow him into an unknown land and place. Abraham did so, and through many great miracles and a whole lot of obedience became the founding member of the nation of Israel. His name represents the nation and the entire faith... so when Lazarus is carried off by angels to Abraham, you're pretty much assuming he's gone to a good place where God is.



The rich man though, we're simply told is buried.

This sober moment in the story is the turning point around which the fates of these two men pivot.

The rich man who **was** comfortable, enjoying life, privileged and served by all around him, dies and becomes someone who is simply buried and as we are about to see, ends up in a very different environment from his earthly existence.

Lazarus on the other hand who **was** in extreme need, pain and desperation, dies and becomes someone who is exalted into the **presence of God**.

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After death, the privileges, comforts, divisions, powers, influences of money and power simply vanish and we will be left with the state of our souls before God.

The rich won't have the cushion, the anaesthetic of wealth and power.

The poor won't have the torment or hunger of lack of wealth.

We will simply all be before God, our maker.\*\*\*

Does this comfort you or trouble you???

Take a moment to let this truth sink in..... In 50 years or so, most of the political figures who consume the headlines of today will be dead.

And many of us in this room too.

Where will we all be then?

Donald Trump? Hilary Clinton? Barack Obama? Me? The homeless man you passed on the way here? The inmate in the jail? Bernie Sanders? Vladimir Putin? All dead...

And the money, power and resources that each of us have..... We won't have them to hide behind any more.

Comforting? Yes

Troubling? Yes

**So, what is the state of both these men before God after their death?**

Jesus goes on, once again graphically and vibrantly, to describe it. and basically the tables have been turned.

v23-26:

***Luke 16:23 In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.***

***Luke 16:24 He called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.’***

***Luke 16:25 But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony.***

***Luke 16:26 Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’***

The rich man is in Hades, the under-world, the “bad place” and now he is in torment, in pain. Much as Lazarus looked through the gates of the rich man’s house in their earthly lives, and saw the feasts and longed for sustenance, now Jesus describes the rich man looking through the gates of heaven,

gazing up where he sees Lazarus, beside Abraham, or in other words, in a good place, and a place of honor. The rich man is desperately hot and thirsty, surrounded by flames, and begs for a drop of water.

But Abraham replies directly to him from heaven, and so in the story represents in some way the voice of God, and says,

“Don’t you remember how during your life you had so much good stuff, so

many comforts, and do you remember how hard times were for Lazarus? Well, now Lazarus is being comforted and you are in pain, and there is a great gap between those two experiences that no one can cross.”

Wow, this sounds harsh.

But let’s take a moment to think about the main point that Jesus is making here:

I hear Jesus saying that **what we choose to do with our money, power and influence here on earth, during our human lives which we are currently all living, will have consequences and effects that last into eternity.**

(REPEAT)

That should stop us in our tracks.

What the rich man did, or did not do with his money, affected not only his earthly life and relationships but also his eternal life and his eternal relationship to God.

The rich man’s choices over time, throughout his life meant he was separated from God.

The rich man ignored the desperate, obvious need of Lazarus who was literally lying at his gate in torment and pain, and chose instead to continually indulge in feasting and extravagance at the expense of a fellow human being.

\*\*\*\*For the rich man, money and power was more important than people. In eternity, his money no longer comforts him, no longer exists, and he is left simply with who he is before God.

Lazarus is exalted to God’s side... the rich man, who has consistently turned away from loving God and others, is cast down.

What you and I choose to do, or not do with our money, power and resources over time, as we live our lives, will affect our relationship with God. Our choices have eternal consequences.

If you like, Jesus is giving us a rare window into the way eternity works.... he is warning us ahead of time, what you do now, how you live, whether you choose to serve God or money and power, has an effect.

In eternity, after you and I die, the realm of money and power will simply cease to exist, cease to have power or influence. But people will endure. Jesus is inviting us, giving us a glimpse of what it means to live with an eternal, a Godly perspective on life: that people are more important than money and power, and that our choices today will affect our relationship and future with God.

If we choose to invest simply in money and power, for its own sake, we will be at a loss in eternity where our heart's desire vanishes.

But if we invest in God and His kingdom, in the people God loves, then as we enter eternity, and see God's face and find people whom our love has reached in God's name, we will be filled with the joy and privilege of partnering with God to love and spread healing and restoration.

## STORY

I went a few years ago to visit my mother in Scotland who was very sick with cancer, and dying. She had been re-diagnosed with a terminal and aggressive cancer in the January, and I last saw her in April. She died soon after that.

She knew she was dying, and so did we.

While I was there she started talking about something she'd seen on TV that week...

Comic relief, an annual drive on UK tv where comics and performers raise money for local and international poverty. This was not something my mother had really noticed before but she was in bed and watching it this year... and as she was dying she watched children in a slum in Africa dying and it took on a whole new significance and urgency.

She started talking about wanting to give money away because it could save lives. Not hers, but others, could be saved or helped.

A new urgency had come over her, which I had not seen before.

As life and death face us, we start to see more clearly the significance of what we can choose, or not choose to do.

A week or so after I got back from visiting was her birthday.

Dilemma: what do you give someone for their birthday when they only have a few weeks left to live?

Suddenly the angst over what gift to give, how to make her happy evaporates...

I called her

Asked her, "What do you want for your birthday?"

Strange question First time ever she said, "What could I possibly want...? Nothing dear. I'm getting rid of stuff now. I don't want it or need it."

I remembered that convo. about Comic Relief

Asked her, if she would rather have a donation in her name to an org that saved lives.. and gave her a few choices.

For her and I, it was like a penny dropped.

Her stuff is gone.. most of it to the British equivalent of Goodwill.

But we could use, choose, pray about using money to bring life and joy to others.

We had resources to help, we had money, that God had given us. Others didn't. More stuff might feel good for a day but giving the chance for a life to change... that brings a lasting joy.

She chose an org that would bring clean water to a village.

Stuff, money, gifts fade away in the shadow of death.

But the power that we have to bring life, relief, healing to others with what we have been given...

That comes into sharp relief.

The fact that Jesus tells us this story is giving us an invitation even before we are facing death to GET IT, that money simply will mean nothing when we face death.

You and I get to have that choice today.

Jesus was inviting my mother, is inviting us, giving us a glimpse of what it means to live with an eternal, a Godly perspective on life: that people are more important than money, and that our choices today will affect our relationship and future with God.

## **APPLICATION**

So what does this mean then for you and I? because if this is true it should radically alter the way we go about life and the way we view money, our resources, our power on this earth, in our lifetime.

- Well, a good place to start is to simply ask God what do you want me to do. I'd encourage you to pray today, maybe during worship, maybe in the car on your way home, what do you have to say to me about this area?

Jesus, when he was teaching and preaching, had a LOT to say about this, and I imagine He still does. So start by asking God and listening, and if you want ideas about HOW to ask and listen to God, please let us know.

Ask God, what one step can I take this week to live with the mind-set and eyes of the KOG and not the KOM?

here are some ideas:

e.g. if you do your weekly budget or accounts, how about praying before and as you do it, asking God to highlight things he may want to change or ways he might want to direct you

e.g. if you don't do accounts or budget it may be that you need to ask god for help in getting a clear picture of your money

you might be well aware of your anxiety or stress in this area - bring that to god in prayer today, share with your small group. Get to the bottom of the stress and anxiety.

E.g. has the recent election ignited in you a passion for a certain area... or maybe overwhelming anxiety... the environment, immigrant rights, LGBTQ rights.... The list is long. Are there organizations and groups that God may be putting on your heart to support with your money and your influence? Maybe the work of this church locally?

-how can you identify the “**Lazarus**” in your life?

Jesus used extremes in this story to make a point. Most of us are not as rich as the rich man in the story, or as poor as Lazarus, but fall somewhere in between. But what Jesus did emphasise is that in our every day lives today there are going to be people who need to be loved by the way we use our money. Lazarus was in the rich man's every day life... he was lying

by his front door, and clearly in need, and the rich man had the resources to help Lazarus, In fact the rich man could have helped Lazarus hugely, transforming his life, without it really impacting the rich man's lifestyle too much.

So, who is your Lazarus? Let's ask God for eyes to see the people in our lives today who are like Lazarus.

Someone maybe you encounter in your day to day life, that you might not even notice, you might have become anesthetized to because it's almost part of the landscape.

Someone who needs love shown to them, needs to know that their suffering matters to you and to God.

Someone whom you have the resources to affect, without necessarily putting yourself in dire jeopardy either.

Maybe someone you know, are close to... or someone who you don't know but a person, or cause God is really putting on your heart. (like my mother)

Who in your life needs to know they are more important to you than your money?

(C of E line :All things come from you O God, and **of your own have we given you**)

## CHALLENGE

v27-31 : **Let's finish the story with Jesus**

All of us are going to die. The rich man died, Lazarus died, my mother died, you and I will die.



Our money will mean little to nothing at that point, and the people in our lives will mean much.

*Story about dying people in hospital?*

At the end of the story that Jesus told, he pictures the rich man begging Abraham in heaven to send a message to his family who are still living in the big house, and still presumably partying every day in beautiful clothes, spending lots and eating and drinking to their fill. The message the rich man wants to send is, "Watch out, one day you die like me, all that money, food, drink and beautiful stuff won't mean a thing... what you're doing now is dangerous and has eternal consequences you're not even remotely aware of...stop. turn around, do something different."

That's the message for us who are listening....

And Abraham replies, that all they need to know, this warning, and others, are clearly there in the Bible, in the words of the people of God. That if the rich man's family are not paying attention to those words then so be it...

Jesus' last line sums it up, with an ironic twist:

***v31, "Abraham said to the rich man, "If they do not listen to moises and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."***

Jesus is saying, if you're not listening now... you might never, even if you witnessed a miracle. Because the longer you stay anethetised, the harder it is to wake up.

Use as prayer to move into worship....

**Luke 1:46 And Mary said,**

**"My soul magnifies the Lord,**

**Luke 1:47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,**

**Luke 1:48** for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

**Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;**

**Luke 1:49** for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.

**Luke 1:50** His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.

**Luke 1:51** He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

**Luke 1:52** He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;

**Luke 1:53** he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.

**Luke 1:54** He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,

**Luke 1:55** according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

**PRAYER MINISTRY**