

INTRO - I took drivers' education as a class in 9th grade in Gainesville, Florida. I actually remember quite a bit of the class, including the first day I drove, in front of the mall which was opening. And my teacher wanted to know why I was nervous! But one class stands out. Near the end of the semester we watched a movie called "Signal 80." This movie showed the results of careless or reckless driving. The movie showed twisted metal, bloody bodies, and grieving families. After watching this movie many of us wondered if we really did want to drive. The movie was an effort to warn us from unhealthy, unsafe driving, by showing us the danger of the results.

Jesus tells the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in today's Gospel, in Luke 16, in order to warn the Jewish religious leaders about the dangers of their attitudes, their behavior, of their lack of faith, by showing the results.

I. In order to understand this parable, we need to know what led Jesus to tell it.

A. In the first verses of Luke 16 Jesus had told the Parable of Unfaithful Steward.

1. A servant, a steward, had been wasteful and unfaithful in managing his master's property and was fired. But, before leaving, he gave such good deals to his masters customers that he set himself up for his unemployment.
2. Jesus says, if the worldly use the things of this world to help their future, the children of light should use the things of this world for eternal good.
3. In other words, be willing to waste, to use generously, to be reckless even, with the wealth of this world to gain heaven. Or, use this world's possessions, not for more possessions, but for the things of God, for Faith hope and love, for life!

B. Today's parable is Jesus' answer to the response of the Pharisees to the first parable.

1. The Pharisees were opposing, doubting, condemning Jesus. Listen to vv. 14-5.
2. **¹⁴ The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.**
3. It was like my Drivers' Ed Class. That movie showed me the danger of careless driving. Jesus is responding today by showing the Pharisees and showing us the dangers of unbelief, of loving the material blessings of this world.

II. So, NOW let's listen to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus to hear for ourselves what Jesus is teaching, as a warning from someone who cares.

A. First, there are a couple of interesting points.

1. Did you notice that it wasn't St. Peter who met the poor man in heaven, like in stories we hear, at the "pearly gates? It was Abraham. Just saying.

2. Secondly, many people today deny hell exists. The thought is not comfortable. What does Jesus say in this parable? Is hell real? The answer is yes.

B. Secondly, please consider the final destination of the rich man and of Lazarus.

1. The poor man was not in heaven because of his good works. We are saved, Lazarus was saved for heaven, through faith in the saving life, and death, and resurrection of the promised Messiah. But, the faith of the Lazarus, in the midst of his suffering, showed in his life. He could endure because He trusted God.

2. The rich man let his wealth get in the way of trusting in God, of loving others. Do you understand? Sometimes we can think we have all we need so that we don't need, and don't want God.

3. The life of the rich man showed lack of faith, faithlessness to God, for which he was condemned. He had trusted his possessions.

C. In agony from hell, the rich man wanted to save his brothers from the same end.

1. Did you hear the response to the rich man's request in the parable? **'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'** ³⁰**And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'** ³¹**He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"**

2. Not only should the brothers listen to Scripture, and trust and seek God and His Messiah, that is what the rich man should have done.

3. Jesus is warning the Pharisees, and he is warning us, don't love and pursue the wealth of this world, love and pursue the love and salvation of God, found in Scripture, found in Jesus.

III. So, Why, in a world of so many wonderful material blessing, would we love God first?

A. The poor man knew his life was full of poverty and illness, but the love of God was sure.

1. So, in spite of the world around him, He loved the Lord who loved Him.

2. Because of his wealth, the rich man ignored Moses and the Prophets, and denied his need for God. His wealth got in the way of faith and love.

B. Americans are blessed materially perhaps more than any nation ever, to the point that even in prosperity, we demand more. We are losing our faith as a nation, perhaps trusting our prosperity.

1. But look at our world. Look at the results of drugs and substances. Look at the result of lust and sexual immorality. Look at the results of greed. Consider the crime, the violence, the divisiveness, the unrest. Look at the poverty and suffering, and the wealth and lack of compassion.

2. And, in spite of our wealth, consider the illness, and death, which we face in this world of sin.

3. Do you see how much we need a savior?

C. There right before the Pharisees was the promised Messiah, the righteous Son of God, the one who sacrifices his life to forgive and to save.

1. As you look at our world, as you look at our lives, do you see that we need a savior?

2. God has sent Jesus, His Son, so that we believe and are saved.

3. The rich man was told, **‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’** Are we listening to Scripture, to the love of God, to the call of God? This parable is for us as well.

4. Believe in Jesus. Love the things of God. Love our neighbors.

CONCLUSION - If your children were playing in the road in the midst of traffic, you would, in love, warn them of the dangers and encourage good behavior. Today Jesus calls us not to love money or the things of this world. He calls us to realize the gift of the love and grace of God, in Jesus. Trust Jesus. Pursue Him in your life. Live for Him. That’s what Jesus told the Pharisees who loved money. That is the loving warning Jesus gives us.