

Imitate the Rich Man

(Based on Things in Hell That We Need in the Church, March 19, 2006, by Charles Spence, chas@MidtownChurch.org)

Introduction: If I tell you that we should imitate one of the several “rich” men mentioned in the book of Luke, who would you guess I mean?

- It’s true that *Zaccheus*, from chapter 19, stands as a great example of repentance for us. But this is not a lesson about *him*.
- Could we mean *the rich, young ruler* in chapter 18? After all, he had kept God’s commands from his earliest days. No, not him, either.
- Could we be referring to the “rich fool” in chapter 12? After all, he seemed to manage physical blessings from God quite well.

While each man might have something to commend him, for the purposes of *this* lesson, we turn our attention to the “rich man” who perhaps seems the least likely for us to want to imitate: The rich man who refused to help the poor, sick Lazarus who begged at the gate of his house.

Text: Luke 16:19-31

3 Things the Rich Man Had

1) Fervency in prayer

- a. Not praying from duty or from habit, but rather from *need*
- b. Like Jesus’ prayers in the garden of Gethsemane
 - i. Remember the sweat that “became as great drops of blood”? (**Luke 22:44**)
 - ii. **Hebrews 5:7** – Jesus “in the days of His flesh, ... offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear”

2) A realization of his needs

- a. He knew he was lost (“saw Abraham afar off”); he knew he was in torments
- b. He knew he needed mercy
 - i. V. 24 – “Father Abraham, have mercy on me...”
 - ii. Like the man in **Luke 18:13** – “*God, be merciful to me a sinner!*”

3) A desire for the lost to be saved (**Luke 16:28** – “lest they also come to this place of torment”)

- a. His concern was directed toward his family members: “Send him to my father’s house, ²⁸for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.” (**Luke 16:27-28**)
- b. Paul’s concern in **Romans 10:1** – “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.”
- c. **1 Timothy 4:16** – “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

- d. Even the rich man knew to send someone who had found favor in the eyes of the Lord! “Send Lazarus!” (**James 5:14** – Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.)

6 Things the Rich Man Learned

- 1) Our fate is sealed upon death.
 - a. We all go to Hades, which has two parts: Paradise (cp. **Luke 23:43; Acts 2:31**) and Torment (“Hell”)
 - b. **Hebrews 9:27** – “it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment”
 - c. The Bible never refers to “purgatory” or doing anything to move a dead person’s soul closer to God.
- 2) Our fate is determined, in part, by how we treat others, including how we spend our money.
 - a. Faith without works is dead. Lazarus was an *opportunity* for the rich man to show his faith, love, and compassion.
 - b. Money is not a “ticket” into heaven. It’s a “test” of how we will use God’s blessings.
 - i. God’s gifts are free, and cannot be purchased. (Simon, the magician, learned this, too. **Acts 8:20**)
 - ii. **Job 1:21** – (Job) said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.”
 - iii. **1 Timothy 6:7** – For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.
- 3) Our consciousness stays alert and aware after we die.
 - a. This story is *not* referred to as a “parable.”
 - b. Everyone knew each other (as with Samuel, Elijah, Moses, etc.)
 - c. This can be wonderful (for enjoying blessings and comfort) or a horrific nightmare full of misery and multiplied by regret
- 4) There is a great distance (a clear separation; “a great gulf *fixed*”) between God’s people and the wicked
 - a. God makes the distinction
 - i. Angels, the pre-diluvian world, and Lot: **2 Peter 2:4-9**

- b. The world makes the distinction
 - i. **John 15:18ff; 17:14-19**
 - ii. **2 Timothy 3:12**
 - c. We should make the distinction
 - i. Abraham, in **Genesis 24:3** – Swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell.
 - ii. **2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1** (including... “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord.”)
 - iii. **1 Corinthians 15:33-34** – “Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.” ³⁴Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.”
 - iv. **2 Timothy 2:22** – “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”
 - v. **1 Peter 4:3-5** – “We have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. ⁴In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. ⁵They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”
- 5) “Moses and the prophets” (i.e., the written word) is our only hope!
- a. **Ephesians 3:3-5** – v. 4 - when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ
 - b. **John 20:30-31** – v. 31 – “These [signs] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”
 - c. **1 Corinthians 4:6** – “That you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written”
- 6) People (including the rich man’s family) need to repent!

Don’t Be Like the Rich Man

- 1) Don’t have a selfish attitude (“Send Lazarus” to serve me. Lazarus?!? The man with sores all over his body who had been laid at the rich man’s gate?!?)
- 2) Don’t have an argumentative spirit (“No, father Abraham!”)
- 3) Don’t trust in sensationalism (“If one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.”)
 - a. **Matthew 12:38-39** – ‘Some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.” ³⁹But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” (Also **1 Corinthians 1:22-23**)
- 4) Don’t wait till it’s too late to start living right