

Who Do You See at the Gate?

“There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.

Luke 16:19

WARNING: do not continue to read this if you are a sting-averse person or allergic to bees. There are so many people in our culture who are easily overlooked. Jesus told a stinging parable to highlight this fact.

Jesus told a parable about a rich man and poor man named Lazarus. A parable is not actually a true story, but a compelling story filled with truth that enables its listeners to emotionally interact with and respond to the truth. Today’s parable is found in Luke 16:19-31. It is packed with so much truth it will take more space than we have here to unpack it all. For instance:

1. Hell, and Heaven are real places with conscious awareness of either suffering or peace;
2. Angels are real and involved in our lives;
3. We maintain our identity in Heaven and Hell;
4. Extreme poverty with Christ is infinitely and eternally better than vast riches without Jesus;
5. People will not be convinced by miracles of the dead being raised to life if they will not first listen to the word of God;
6. Sins of fathers are passed on to sons;
7. It is easy to overlook the poor at our “gate.”

Can we just pause for a moment and consider that last statement? Lately, God has wrecked me over this truth. When you look at the parable of the rich man (unnamed by Jesus) and Lazarus, what is stunning is how the rich man never repents of his sin. **His sin was not a sin of privilege but a sin of pride.**

The rich man daily feasted while Lazarus daily begged outside of his gate longing for a crumb. Intense human need was within eyesight and daily overlooked and possibly rationalized. Have you felt the discomfort of a homeless man begging at the corner of 2222 and 360 as you hoped the light would change so you would not have to momentarily park 6 feet away from him while lamely finding reasons to look away? What about a man sleeping outside of a church on the sidewalk near a bar?

James 2:3–4 (ESV) — and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Even in Hell we see that the “rich man” thought of Lazarus as a servant who should be sent to dip his finger in the water and give him relief. The rich man never saw Lazarus as a **human being created in the image of God**; he saw him as less than **because of his address**, because of a sinful social construct of worth.

Lord, forgive us (me) for the sin of pride that causes us (me) to assign value and overlook others based on anything other than your declaration of worth purchased at the Cross of Christ!

Who do you see and what will you do?