

# Stories: Old and New

## Parables of Jesus for 21st century society

### The parable of the rich man and Lazarus

**Read:** Luke 16:1, 19-31; Deut. 15:7-8; Isaiah 58:6-7; Micah 6:8.

1. Luke 16:19-31. If you had read this parable for the first time, what would you make of it? In which way is it different from other parables of Jesus?
2. What do you find strange, difficult or even shocking about Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus?
3. Against popular opinion, why might this story not be about what happens to us in the life after-death?
4. What reason is given in the Bible passage for the rich man going to Hades and Lazarus being taken to "Abraham's side"? Please quote the verse! Does this surprise you at all?
5. So, if this parable is not about what happens in the next life, what does it teach us? What is its challenge in one short sentence? (Any clues in the context?)
6. How do the two parables of Luke 16 compare?
7. Do you see God's coming Judgment as a good thing or a bad thing, and why? Tom Wright, *Surprised by Joy*:

*"God's coming judgment is a good thing, something to be celebrated, longed for, yearned over. It causes people to shout for joy, and indeed the trees of the field to clap their hands. In a world of systematic injustice, bullying, violence, arrogance and oppression, the thought that there might be a coming day when the wicked are firmly put in their place and the poor and the weak are given their due is the best news there can be. Faced with a world in rebellion, a world full of exploitation and wickedness, a good God must be a God of judgment."*

8. In which way did the rich man and his five brothers miss the message of Moses and the Prophets?
9. Who is Lazarus at our gate? What is our response?

# True Riches

The snare of money, stronger than the human will,  
Deceives the heart with promises it can't fulfil;  
The urge to gather, store and hoard  
Conceals itself as right reward  
And wealth hard won  
So what should be an instrument of grace  
Becomes a tyrant master in God's place.

And Mammon feeds our human greed  
Disguising want as rightful need,  
An all consuming one!  
But Heaven's riches lie in servant guise  
To give away - love's greater prize;  
Abundant life the rich reward  
In serving Jesus Christ Our Lord,  
The Father's Righteous One.

So look to be an instrument of grace  
His hands and feet with human face,  
Seek first to serve our neighbours' needs  
And put aside our selfish greed  
In following His Son.

Martin Wild  
Nov 2017