

Luke 16:19-31

Pentecost 19; October 16, 2022

Psychologists and other researchers have long studied the impact that colors have on human life; color has been found to influence people's ideas, perceptions, and preferences for things both obvious and discreet. Color is used in marketing and advertising to entice people to purchase products and can influence a person's emotional state and mood. Color can help companies make decisions like product packaging and brand logos.

There has been a lot of research done about color preference and what it means. There are studies done that even say whatever color is your favorite may say something about you. For example, if your favorite color is....

- **Red:** Red is considered to be the color of energy and vibrancy. It is the 'power' color. It is commonly associated with high-powered executives and CEO's.
- **Orange:** People who have a preference for orange may be very social and extroverted, and may challenge themselves in various ways throughout their life in an effort to make themselves better.
- **Yellow:** This is said to suggest logic and creativity for new and different ideas.
- **Green:** People who like the color green may seek nurturance, safety, security, and reassurance from others that they are loved and valued.
- **Blue:** Associated with a calming presence and may suggest that a person seeks peace and comfort.
- **Purple:** This is a color that suggests a person may be compassionate and dedicated to helping others.
- **Black:** The color black suggests preference for power and control in various situations, and may be indicative of moodiness.
- **Gray:** This suggests that a person may struggle with making decisions and be more indecisive than other color preferences.

I don't know if any of those colors describe you, but this morning in our text, purple has a lot to say about one of the people in Jesus' parable. **"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day."** As you look at those words, you can't help but ask the question: *Why is purple singled out?* At the time of Jesus, purple was only worn by the super-rich. It was so costly to make purple dye. To make the purple dye, a liquid was extracted from a certain kind of shellfish. To make one gram of dye, it would take more than 10,000 shellfish. So, when someone wore purple, it was a way for that person to show everyone else just how rich you were. It was said that purple dye was more precious than gold.

In contrast to this over-the-top rich man, was a beggar named Lazarus. **"At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores."** These two men are about as far apart as one could get. Why did Jesus tell this parable? What's his point in the parable?

This story is not describing what happens to the believer and unbeliever when they die. It is not describing what heaven and hell are looking like. The details have been made up by Jesus, and they are exaggerated by Jesus to make a point. Yes, heaven and hell are talked about in the parable, but the point is not to describe what heaven and hell will exactly look like.

Jesus' point in this parable is not trying to get Christians to help the poor. He is not saying that it is bad for someone to be rich in life. Nor is he saying that if you are rich you are going to hell. He is not saying that if you are poor, you get to go to heaven. Whether someone is wealthy or not has nothing to do with either going to heaven or not. Look at the picture that Jesus describes after Lazarus dies. **"The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side."** Did you catch it? **"Abraham's side."** Abraham was a very wealthy man. He had many servants, cattle, gold and silver. He had his own personal group of soldiers numbering 318. Abraham would have been one of those super-rich people. So, when you see the poor man and Abraham in the parable together in heaven, Jesus' parable is not primarily concerned about wealth.

So, what is Jesus' point in the parable? The point of Jesus' parable in this passage is to wake up the Pharisees and other religious people to the fact that Moses and the Prophets, the Old Testament, point the sinner to the way of salvation.

They point to Jesus. Chapter 15 of Luke begins: **“Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”** Jesus would say “yes.” That is why Jesus came into this world. Following those words, Jesus goes on to teach a number of parables to show them that. The rich man in this parable dies and finds himself in torment. Not because he was wealthy, but because he did not believe what Moses and the Prophets had to say about the Messiah.

But we understand that Lazarus did trust in Jesus. Lazarus never speaks a word in this parable. Of all the parables that Jesus told, there is only one parable that Jesus gives a name to one of the characters in the parables. This one – Lazarus. You can't help but ask: *“why?”* Lazarus means *“God is my helper.”* His name is reflective of a heart of faith. Perhaps, Jesus was making a point in giving this man a name. He knew him by name. Jesus knows each one of you here by name. Jesus once said: **“He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”** (John 10:3) Jesus knows your name. If he knows us by name, he knows what we are going through. He knows exactly how to help us. He promises that he will never leave us.

Therefore, it doesn't really matter if we are rich and wearers of purple or dirt-poor beggars. We have everything that we need in Jesus. The promise that Jesus gives us in our text is still true today: **‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’** In other words, we have everything we need to know in God's Word. Through faith in Jesus we have heaven. May we join in with the Apostle Peter in saying: **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”** (John 6:68) Amen.