

Luke 16:19-31

Pentecost 16; September 28 & 29, 2025

Have you ever asked yourself that question— *“What’s the point?”* Maybe it was in the middle of a long project that did not seem to be getting anywhere. Maybe it was when you were going through a struggle, and you could not see any reason for the pain. Sometimes students ask it in class: *“What is the point of learning this? When will I ever use it?”* And sometimes, if we are honest, we even ask it about faith, about following Jesus. Life can feel full of activity, rules, expectations, and struggles. So, we stop and wonder: *“What’s the point of it all?”*

That question isn’t new. God’s people have asked it many times before. And in His Word, the Lord provides the answer. He reminds us why we are here, why we follow Him, why the struggles of life are worth enduring, and where it all leads. Jesus tells a familiar story to drive the point home. The parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus is a story of complete reversal. On earth, their lives could not have been more different: a poor man who suffered terribly and a rich man who lived in daily luxury. But death turned the tables. The poor man found comfort at Abraham’s side, while the rich man was left in torment in Hades.

That’s the scene. The drama unfolds in a conversation between the suffering rich man and Father Abraham. Desperate for relief, the rich man pleads with Abraham to send Lazarus—first to bring him comfort, then to warn his brothers. But Abraham cannot grant the request. The divide is too great. The chasm between them cannot be crossed.

Every parable Jesus tells is meant to teach us something. So, what is this one really about? Its main purpose isn’t to give us a detailed lesson on the afterlife—heaven and hell. Yes, both appear in the story, but we have many other passages in Scripture that speak far more clearly about what those places are like. This parable is not meant to serve as a blueprint of what happens to believers and unbelievers after death, nor should it be the foundation of our understanding about life after death. *So, what’s the point?*

The point of this story is not about wealth. Jesus is not saying that being rich automatically makes someone evil or that being poor automatically makes someone good. If that were the point, then why is Abraham the one speaking from heaven? **“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side.”** If it would be about wealth, then why Abraham? Abraham was one of the wealthiest men of his time. Scripture tells us he had around a thousand servants, including 318 trained soldiers in his household. He possessed great herds, vast flocks, and abundant stores of silver and gold. By any measure, Abraham was an economic powerhouse. So, when Jesus pictures the poor beggar resting at Abraham’s side, it’s clear—this parable is not really about wealth. Riches or poverty don’t decide eternity.

If it’s not about money, then *what is the point?* The point is this: there is a chasm that no amount of wealth, status, or good intentions can cross—the chasm between sinful people and a holy God. And yet, what we cannot do, Christ has done for us. He entered our poverty, bore our sin, and suffered our death. By his cross and resurrection, Jesus bridged the uncrossable divide. He is the only way to eternal comfort, the only hope for sinners, the only bridge across the chasm. That’s the point of the parable: to turn our eyes away from ourselves and fix them on Jesus, who alone carries us to Abraham’s side.

Is Jesus teaching that the wealthy are always responsible for caring for the poor? Look at the two men in his story—they stand on opposite ends of the spectrum. **“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. 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.”** It’s true that Scripture elsewhere calls attention to the injustices between rich and poor. Those are real and worth noticing. But that’s not the main point here. Jesus isn’t simply urging economic fairness or pushing for social reform. This parable has a deeper purpose.

Being rich does not automatically mean you are far from God, just as being poor doesn’t guarantee closeness to him. Wealth can be a dangerous distraction, but it can also be a gift to be used for good. Poverty, too, doesn’t automatically equal faith. So, if this parable is not really about money, *what is the point?* That is exactly the question Jesus wants us to

ask. He is pointing us beyond the surface of wealth and poverty to something eternal—something that matters far more than what is in your bank account or what’s on your dinner table.

Look at verse 26 in our parable. **“And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.”** Maybe the point is the **“great chasm.”** What is the **great chasm?** Sin.

The prophet Isaiah spoke about this: **“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”** (Isaiah 59:2) What stands between you and God? Sin. Jesus came to call His people to repent and trust in God. Here the rich man’s reference to **Father Abraham** is important. The Pharisees also called Abraham as their Father. **“If you were Abraham’s children,”** said Jesus, **“then you would do what Abraham did. As it is, you are looking for a way to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the works of your own father.”** (John 8:39-41) Yet, they didn’t love nor listen to Jesus. The Apostle Paul would later write: **“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.”** (1 Timothy 2:5) Because of their unbelief and sin, they were separated from God by a **great chasm.**

Jesus’ parable is a wake-up call to the Pharisees and to everyone listening: only he can bridge the great chasm between God and sinners. This is nothing new—God had already told his people. As Abraham says in the parable, **“If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”** In other words, everything needed is already found in Christ, the fulfillment of the Scriptures. Abraham’s words about someone returning from the dead point us to Jesus’ resurrection. The only way we have access to that resurrection is through the prophetic promises that accompany it. And what do those promises declare? That Jesus was raised for us.

His victory over death guarantees our own resurrection. It gives us the same eternal joy that Lazarus now enjoys. This is the good news you proclaim: Jesus alone bridges the great divide. In baptism, we have died with him. By faith, we have been raised with him. And when he returns on the last day, we will ascend with him to live forever in the company of Abraham and all God’s children. ***That’s the point of the parable!*** From its first page to its last, the Bible tells the story of the help that God provided mankind in his Son, Jesus Christ. It is not riches or the lack of riches that guarantees for us heaven. It is the Word of God and its promises that guarantees are names are written in the halls of heaven eternity. Amen.