

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 16: 19-26

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. This week, we are going to read Luke Chapter 16 and today we will read verses 19 to 26.

Yesterday we read that Jesus began by speaking to the disciples about how to serve, and He used the parable of the unjust steward as an example to tell the disciples: You are servants; you cannot serve God and mammon at the same time. As a result, the Pharisees who were listening nearby could not help but sneer and laugh at Jesus. Jesus then gave some teachings directed at them. After that, starting from verse 19, He spoke about a real incident. It was because of the interruption by these Pharisees that Jesus told this incident, and through it we also come to know where people actually go after they die.

The first thing we must recognize is that this incident is not a parable but a real event, because the characters in it have names. Although the rich man's name is not given to us, the beggar is named Lazarus, and Abraham is also mentioned. Therefore, through this incident Jesus tells us where people actually go after they die.

Verse 19: "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day."

In this chapter Luke specially records that Jesus spoke about how to handle the issue of finances. Because of the interruption by the Pharisees, Jesus told them the story of a rich man. This rich man was clothed in purple—purple was a color that only nobles could wear at that time—and in fine linen garments of the best quality, which shows that he was extremely wealthy. He fared sumptuously every day, which shows that his life was very comfortable, very prosperous, and that he

greatly enjoyed his life. He was a person who pursued earthly wealth and also a person who enjoyed all kinds of wealth on earth.

Because Jesus said that a servant cannot serve God and mammon at the same time, but the Pharisees did not agree, Jesus specially brought out this example. This rich man was a person who served mammon, because money was his master. Therefore he was very successful and very wealthy. He lived a very good life every day and fared sumptuously every day.

Verse 20: “But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate,”

This person who was unsuccessful in people’s eyes was a beggar, yet he had a name; he was called Lazarus. The rich man was clothed in purple and fine linen, while this beggar was covered with sores all over his body. He had no way to support himself, so he was laid at the rich man’s gate.

Verse 21: “desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.”

He was at the gate of this rich man. In the midst of their luxurious feasting, some scraps of food would fall from the table, and he depended on these fallen scraps to satisfy his hunger, just like the dogs. The dogs also often ate the things that fell from the table. This also shows that this rich man regarded the beggar’s status as the same as that of the dogs. He would not use the wealth he already had to make friends or to help those in need; instead, he let them live like dogs. The beggar’s status seemed to be the same as the dogs’, waiting together with the dogs under the table for the scraps that fell from the table.

These dogs even came and licked his sores. Because he was covered with sores all over his body and felt very uncomfortable, the dogs seemed not to mind and instead came and licked his sores. In other words, these dogs treated Lazarus better

than this rich man did. This rich man looked down on him and would not help him, while the dogs instead would lick his sores.

Remember that this chapter is speaking about wealth. These unrighteous riches are for us to make friends in this present age, to help others, and through such help to build some relationships that belong to eternity. But this rich man only cared about enjoying his luxurious feasting. He completely could not see those who needed help and needed sympathy.

Verse 22: “So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.”

Death is very fair. Every person—whether you are rich or a beggar, whether you have power and influence or are an ordinary citizen—death will come one day. Although Lazarus lived a very poor and miserable life on earth, he was a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. After he died, he was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. Death is not the end of a person but the beginning of another stage. The body passes away, but the soul still exists. After death, angels came to serve him and carried him to Abraham’s bosom.

Then the rich man also died and was buried. Because he was rich, he lived very well on earth, but one day he too would die. Not only did he die, he was also buried, because he had money and had long prepared a tomb. Here it is not mentioned at all that Lazarus was buried. Probably, like all the penniless beggars and homeless people at that time, after he died his body was simply thrown into the Valley of Hinnom and burned together with the other garbage.

After a person dies, the soul leaves the body. Where the body is is actually not important; what is important is the soul. This beggar’s soul was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. But as for this rich man, he died and was buried, probably in a very good tomb.

Verse 23: “And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

He was in torments in Hades. He had enjoyed himself on earth. During his time on earth he had not made good use of the wealth God had given him and had not used his wealth to make friends. All his life he had taken mammon as his master. After he died, his soul was in torments in Hades.

The way Jesus told this incident is actually very meaningful. We all think that when a person dies, that is the end and there is nothing left. Actually it is not so. After a person dies, everyone goes to Hades. And Hades has two different parts. One part has Abraham in it, and all of Abraham’s descendants who are his spiritual offspring—those who, like Abraham, were justified by faith—are in Abraham’s bosom.

Hades has another part that is the part of torment. After this rich man died, he went to the torment part of Hades. Being in torment was already painful enough, yet he could still see Abraham from afar and also see Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom.

Verse 24: “Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’”

He was in the torment part of Hades. There were flames burning there, and he was burned so painfully and was extremely thirsty. He saw Abraham from afar and also saw Lazarus in his bosom. “Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me.’” It is very clear that he was a physical descendant of Abraham, but having Abraham as your ancestor does not guarantee that you can be with Abraham in Hades.

Because he was extremely thirsty there, he begged Abraham to send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue. It is very special that in Hades they could still communicate and speak to each other.

Verses 25-26: “But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.’”

Through this incident Jesus clearly tells us that after a person dies, it is not the end. After we die, our soul goes down to Hades. Hades has two parts: one part is enjoying comfort in Abraham’s bosom, and the other part, like this rich man, is suffering torment there. Between these two parts there is a great gulf fixed, so people cannot cross from this side to that side, nor from that side to this side. Although they cannot cross over, they can still see each other and hear each other speak.

This rich man had received his good things while he was in the world, and Lazarus had received evil things while he was in the world. In Hades the situation was exactly the opposite. Those who enjoyed good things on earth do not necessarily enjoy good things in Hades, and those who suffered on earth will not suffer again in Hades.

What determines which side you will be on? It depends on whether in this life you served God or served mammon. Even though you are a physical descendant of Abraham, this cannot help you. You must be a descendant of Abraham by faith and accept the salvation of Jesus Christ by faith. Although you may have been poor and miserable on earth, although you may have suffered much and may have been looked down upon by others, as long as you are willing to hold on to your faith and continue to serve your Lord and not serve mammon, when you die there will be angels to carry you to Abraham’s bosom. If all your life you serve mammon, you will end up like this rich man—without angels leading the way, going directly to suffer in Hades.

Let us pray together: Lord, truly give us wisdom so that in this life we learn how to make the right choice and help us not to serve mammon. When we are willing to persist in walking the path of faith and are willing to serve You wholeheartedly even

in all kinds of difficult circumstances, when we finish the course of this life, we may wait for the resurrection together with all those who have received salvation in the paradise of Hades. Help me in today's life to exalt Your name and glorify Your name, so that I may be a person who serves God. Bless my life. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ!