

Luke 16:19-31

Thesis: The economy of the world and the economy of God stand in stark contrast.

Illustration: A little girl was standing outside her Sunday school classroom when the pastor noticed she was holding a big storybook entitled, “Jonah and the Whale.” The pastor wanted to have some fun with her so he asked her, “Do you really believe that Jonah was swallowed by a whale?” The little girl frowned and declared, “Of course I do!” The pastor pushed her a bit and said, “You really believe that a man can be swallowed by a big whale, stay inside for three days and then come out and still be alive?” The little girl said, “Absolutely. The story is in the Bible and we studied it in Sunday school today.”

Then the pastor asked, “Can you prove to me that the story is true?” She thought for a moment and then said, “Well, when I get to Heaven, I’ll ask Jonah.” The pastor was on a roll and asked, “Well, what if Jonah’s not in Heaven?” She then put her hands on her little hips and sternly declared, “Then you can ask him!”

Hell—it’s often joked about, but most people don’t want to be the butt of the joke when Hell is involved. I’ve been in churches where Hell is the topic of every sermon. I’ve also attended churches that never talk about it. Yet, everyone has an opinion about it.

What does the world believe about hell?

The 3 R’s of Hell

1. **Rationalism** – No God = No hell
2. **Ridicule** – Lawrence O’Donnell (MSNBC) last week, “The book of Revelation is a work of fiction describing how a truly vicious God would bring about the end of the world. No half-smart religious person believes the book of Revelation anymore. Those people are certain that their God would never turn into a malicious torturer and mass murderer beyond Hitler’s wildest dreams.”
3. **Religion**
 - a. Liberals = God is love
 - b. Christian Science = Hell is an error of the mind.
 - c. JWs = Annihilationism
 - d. 7th Day Adventists = No conscious existence until the resurrection. Wicked will be destroyed at the end of time.
 - e. Mormons = Hell lasts just for the Millennium.

Today we’re going to look at the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, who find themselves in Hades (the holding place for the dead). The Rich Man finds out that **the economy of the world and the economy of God don’t agree. Your status in this life does not equal your status in death.**

vv 19-21 – A Contrast in Life

- **Rich Man** – flamboyant purple like a king, underwear from the finest linen, ate the best food. Probably a Jew b/c of the audience (Pharisees).
- **Lazarus** – poor, thrown (*ballw*) at the gate, full of sores, begging for crumbs, and licked (comforted) by dogs.
- Jesus speaks directly to the Pharisees and reminds them of the hypocrisy. They were supposed to take care of the Israel’s poor (Ex 22–23; Deut 10, 14, 16). He doesn’t try to explain how/why Lazarus fell into this situation.

How does society / do we ignore the poor around us?

v 22-24 – A Contrast in Death (fortunes reversed)

- **Rich Man** - would have had an elaborate funeral (hired mourners, purchased expensive spices for the body, and buried in an elaborate tomb) = the whole town could hear it. In agony in Hades, abode of unsaved before GWTJ (Rev 20:11-15).
- **Lazarus** – buried if he was lucky, yet pictured enjoying the Millennial banquet (cf. 13:28-29) next to the host, a place of honor, at Abraham’s side. While Lazarus begged for scraps of food in life, the Rich Man begs for a drop of water in eternity.
- Rich man could see Lazarus. This refutes the doctrine of “soul sleep.”

Jesus spoke directly to the Pharisees and their hardness of heart. He challenged them to think now about their eternal destiny b/c soon it would be too late. ***How/why do people avoid thinking about their destiny?***

The Rich Man addressed Abraham as “Father Abraham.” What do you think the Pharisees were thinking at this point in the story? (cultural connection & warning to Pharisees not to count on their Jewish heritage to admit them into the kingdom.) ***What did Jesus intend for them to hear?***

What does v24 say about the Rich Man’s view of Lazarus even now?

vv 25-31 – A Contrast in Eternity

- **vv25-26** – Lazarus experienced pain in life. The Rich man had good things. This underscores the fact that the Rich Man should have shown mercy upon Lazarus. Now their experiences are reversed.

How are the world’s economy and God’s economy different? (temporal/eternal, those that value God’s word now will not necessarily be blessed but they will in eternity)

- **vv 27-31** – The Rich Man now worries about his loved ones. Not only does he repent (too late) but he has to live with the knowledge that he can’t do anything about it now.
- He tells Abraham, “If a dead person goes to my family, they will believe.” Yet, the Pharisees wouldn’t believe even if Jesus rose from the dead.
- *In other words, Pharisees, you are the Rich Man. Your experience will change upon death.*

How should this inform our evangelism? (poor may be easier to evangelize than rich, they’ll either believe the Word or they won’t, all will be clear when the veil is removed)