

1. HOW DIFFERENT ARE THE CONDITIONS WHICH GOD ALLOTS TO DIFFERENT MEN

We have a rich man and a beggar, a poor man. Jesus says not a word of in praise of either the riches or the poverty. He describes the condition of each, neither giving praise nor condemnation to either. The contrast between the two men is painfully striking.

- One who possessed an abundance of the world's goods (vs. 19).
- One who had literally nothing. He has no friends, diseased and half starved (vs. 20,21).
- Both are children of Adam. Both come from the same dust, belong to the same family and inhabit the same earth, and yet how different their conditions.

Let's not be too quick to draw conclusions that aren't in the text. The rich aren't always bad and do not always go to hell. The poor aren't always good and always go to heaven. The Scriptures describe the plight of both men.

Universal equality is a very high sounding expression promoted by politicians and social justice warriors. Many in every age have disturbed every society by stirring up the rich against the poor. But so as long as the world is under the present order of things, universal equality cannot be obtained.

In the world there are wise and foolish, strong and weak, healthy and diseased, lazy and diligent, provident and some improvident. There is sun, rain, floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, storms and many other things beyond man's control. Therefore, there will always be rich and poor. Deuteronomy 15:11 **"For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land."**

Application: Take every man in America and give him \$100,000. And at the end of that year one will have nothing and the other will have saved and spent wisely.

It's not society that has caused man's greatest problem, it is sin. Sin is the grand cause of suffering for the rich man and for the poor. The equality of man in terms of possessions will never be equal in the midst of a world of pride, sin, selfishness and greed. Sin must first be cast out, the devil be bound, the Prince of Peace to rule and reign. This is the only place of true equality, all in the presence of God as children of the King.

Beware of governments that say they have a method of education, by any political party to rid the world of inequality. We live in a fallen world. Corruption is at the highest ranks and greed drives man to possess all he can and the expense of others. The rich man and Lazarus represent the two classes of people that will always be in the world.

2. A MAN'S TEMPORAL CONDITION IS NO TEST OF THE STATE OF HIS SOUL

The rich man seems to have everything according to the pattern of the world, vs. 19. These temporal things affirm Ecclesiastes 10:19 **"Men prepare a meal for enjoyment, and wine makes life merry, and money is the answer to everything"** Proverbs 14:20 **"The poor is hated even by his neighbor, But those who love the rich are many."**

Take away the riches and he has nothing left, nothing in the world to come. With all his riches he had no treasure laid up in heaven. With all the purple garments he had not righteous garments. With all his friends, no one to advocate on his behalf before God. With all the splendor and palace, he had no home in the eternal world. Without God, without holiness, without justification, without the blood and redemption, he lives but a few short years. Although he seemed to be rich, he was poor.

Lazarus appears to have been one the world considers sad, pitiful and a failure. It's hard to perceive of a greater misery than that of Lazarus. He had no money, no house, no food, no income, no retirement, no nice clothes. He lay at a rich man's gate just looking for crumbs. But he was rich. He was clothed in righteousness, he possessed the inheritance of God, he had a home in the eternal world, his name was in the book of life.

Application: We will do well to measure a man by God's standard, not the amount of income or possessions, but the condition of their souls. Revelation 2:9 **"I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich)."** King Ahab was ruler over ten tribes of Israel and Obadiah was a servant in his household. We can be sure that riches and garments are no true marks of God's favor. They are often a hinderance to a man's soul. Paul warns Timothy **"But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction"** (1 Timothy 6:9).

Poverty and trials are not sure signs of God's anger. They are often blessings in disguise. They serve to wean us from the world. They teach a man to set his affections of heaven not earth (cf. Colossians 3:1-2).

3. ALL CLASSES OF MEN COME TO THE SAME END

Both men came to the same end, they died. Genesis 3:19 **"By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."** This is the lot of all men, unless the Lord returns. Genesis 5:5 **"So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died."** All the scheming, planning, inventions, successes, achievements, awards, honors and technological advancements will not disarm or conquer death.

Death is a mighty leveler. He spares none. He waits for none. He will not tarry until you are ready. He will not be kept out by doors, bars or bolts. One man rolls happily through life with not a care

and the other with all the money which he can buy anything he wants. Another never has a retirement, a second home or toys. Yet, both meet the same end, "He died." May we take the advise and council of the great preacher Richard Baxter *"I'll preach as though I ne'er preach again, as a dying man to dying men!"*

Application: Oh that men would learn to live as if they were dying.

4. HOW PRECIOUS A BELIEVERS SOUL IN THE SIGHT OF GOD

What we know of the rich man is not what kind of funeral he had, his friends that were there or the whereabouts of his wealth. What we do know is he lifted his eyes in hell. The funeral of Lazarus was probably no different. But Lazarus is carried away to a place of rest where the faithful are. Lazarus may not have had many friends here but consider this:

- Though his sins were scarlet they shall be white as snow
- Was his heart prone to evil? A new heart and a new spirit were given

His plight in life was wisely ordered by God. His steps were ordered by the Lord. Psalms 37:23 **"The steps of a man are established by the Lord, And He delights in his way."** He was kept on earth till he was ripe for heaven, and not a moment too soon or a moment too late. And then when the believers work is done, God came for him, and carried him home.

Concluding thoughts:

- We should live as if it were our last day
- The plight we find ourselves in isn't out of the control of God