

LEARNING FOR LAZARUS

Read Luke 16:19-31

- Why would I bring this up? You know, I'm sure there are some who are worried about loved ones dying (and understandably so given COVID-19). However, majority are doing what they can to be safe and feel they can weather the storm if they're hit with it. *Reality is that most are fearful about their jobs.* Many are already taking a hit regarding their income. There's a healthy balance between taking wise steps with your money and leaving the rest to the Lord. He will provide.
- No doubt, as Jesus taught, we need to remember that a love for this world doesn't work out well for us in the long run. **Bing rich doesn't mean you'll be in torment anymore than being poor means you'll be in paradise.** But, we are reminded what Jesus said about the poor in spirit - **"theirs is the kingdom of heaven."**
- How wonderful it was for Lazarus - being at Abraham's side. Jesus taught that **"many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11).** I'm being poetic here, but it's pretty sweet dining with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when you've been eating table scraps. Yet, **"the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 8:12).**
 - You know - no one would view Lazarus' life as a blessing. It was bad. That's what Abraham said about Lazarus. "Hey, you received good stuff, but not Lazarus!" **Yet, there was a blessing in it all.** His trials would make Paradise so much sweeter. How can it not?
 - I don't believe that we lose our memories of earth when we pass. The rich man was thinking about his brothers. He knew who Lazarus was. Abraham stated how life treated both men. So, the knowledge was there. I think about Paul. Can you imagine all the trials and tribulations. All the battles fought for Christ. Then he enjoys rest with the faithful before him. How sweet heaven will be.
 - So, what I'm sayin' is - you're blessed if you're like Lazarus. Listen, a man who lives without, eating crumbs off a table with only dogs as friends, is a friend of Jesus. These kind of individuals persevere through anything! Would you want to be anything different? A prepared person. A person provided for at the end. You remember the woman who asked for the Lord's help concerning her demon possessed daughter. But, the woman was a Canaanite. **Matthew 15:23-28, "But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and begged Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she is crying out after us.' He answered, 'I was sent only to the**

lost sheep of the house of Israel.' But she came and knelt before Him, saying, 'Lord, help me.' And He answered, 'It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.' She said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed instantly."

- All of our trials in life remind us this is not our home. If this life were too good, would we want to go home and be with the Lord?
- It's a good time to be reminded of the day to day blessings. These trials are already making this life more precious.
 - Many are appreciating the ability to work and earn money.
 - Many are appreciating everything slowing down a bit - it's not as noisy.
 - Many are appreciating having good health.
 - Many are appreciating basic freedoms like going out to eat, catching a movie, or going to the store without paranoia.
 - Many are appreciating having brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - Many are appreciating the ability to worship God with their brethren.
 - Many are appreciating the knowing why we even worship the way we do.
 - Many are appreciating quality family time.
 - Have you appreciated all this more? Are you seeking to help your spiritual family? To find a way to bless others because of your relationship with the Lord? Brethren, have you studied the word any more over the last 2-3 weeks?
- You know - it's so easy to appreciate the physical blessings, but so many times it's more difficult to appreciate the spiritual. One of the reasons is that because freedom in Christ doesn't mean freedom from trials. A person can lose a house and they immediately appreciate having a home. In other words - something has to be taken away for appreciation to kick in. Like the rich man - He had to forfeit his soul and experience torment for him to appreciate being poor in spirit. Problem is - it was too late.
- I truly hope we are using this trial to our advantage. Being reminded this isn't our home, yet appreciating more of what God has given to us now. What good will it be for our country to appreciate good health, jobs and freedom if we're slaves to sin? **James 5:5, "You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter."** What good is it to come out of this (and we'll come out of this) if we've not grown closer to God? For majority of the world it will take Jesus returning until they acknowledge Him, but it will be too late. Brethren, let's not allow that to be true of us. Put things into perspective. Reevaluate

your priorities. Surely you've seen the frailty of life. Surely you've seen how goods can be here one second and gone the next. You've seen how a person can be here one day and gone the next. Surely you've seen that the Lord goes nowhere. His promises still stand. He does not change. Neither does His word. And we will be all be judged by it (**John 12:48**).

- This brings me to the last point: **Study**. Brethren, if we can't find the time to study during times like this I don't think we will. God's word both warns and rewards. It equips when we feel disarmed. It brings light when there's darkness. It gives answers when we're lost. It teaches us of our salvation.
- This is something we tend to take for granted. If we appreciate our physical blessings, how much more do we appreciate being saved? Do you appreciate it? **Honestly, is it as valuable as the freedom of going to a movie or out to dinner?** I recently watched a video of a man who was wrongly convicted of murdering two young kids. He spent years in prison. He was finally released on bond due to poor counsel, but he had one more trial to endure. He tasted freedom for 4 years. He went back home. Had two children and then found himself before a judge and jury one more time. Would he be set free? He could barely stand as the judge read the verdict. Two men were holding both arms. You could feel the anxiety in the room as his family sat behind as, I'm sure, everything played out in slow motion. The judge spoke: Innocent. The man collapsed to the table and cried out of relief and appreciation.
- Brethren, we were guilty of murder in a real sense. Jesus' life was taken for you and me. We were found guilty before God. Not wrongly accused. We've been set free because of Jesus. He bore the wrath of God on our behalf. That's never changed. We've been set free. We're not out on bond for a future judgement. We've been set free and given full confidence that when we approach the judgment seat of God we will be found guiltless because of Christ. Let's not forget - that's what gives us such peace during times such as these. It's a peace the world doesn't have. It's beyond what they understand. May God be with you all.