

“The Rich Man and Lazarus”

Luke 16:19-31

(Introduction)

Do you all want to be happy? This is a foolish question. Many people would like to live happily and lead a happy life. But what exactly will make you happy? Is it enough money? A close family? Is it good physical and mental health?

What conditions make you feel happy?" According to a survey by the Cabinet Office, "health," "family," and "family finances" are at the top of the list of items that many people consider important when judging happiness. It is clear that "good physical and mental health, family, and money" are important for many people to feel happy. What do you think?

In today's Bible reading, Jesus talks about the very rich and the homeless. Normally many people would think that the financially well-off millionaire is happy and blessed, while the poor, homeless, sick and homeless are unhappy. However, Jesus throws a wrench into these prejudices and preconceptions. For it is the stereotype that the rich are happy and the poor are cursed that promotes unhappiness and prevents all people from being happy.

Luke 16:19-31

As you have just read, the story of the rich man and Lazarus will be interesting because it describes the afterlife. This is because it describes something we cannot experience beforehand. But Jesus' primary intent is not to teach about the afterlife. The three points I want to focus on are these.

First, let's look at what really makes our lives happy, comparing the rich man and poor Lazarus. The secret of happiness, which money cannot give, is a living communion with God. An intimate relationship with God will give lasting and deep satisfaction.

Second, think about how you must view life as you contemplate eternity. You will reap in the future what you have wished, thought, and worked for in the life you have now. And third, what will be your joy and hope in a situation of poverty, suffering, and disappointment? We want to discover the secret of living life through the Gospel.

1. True happiness

In order to understand today's Scriptures accurately, let us first look at the context in which Jesus spoke this parable and to whom he spoke it.

Luke 16:14,15, "The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. And he said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.'"

The Pharisees were well versed in the Bible, knew well who God was, and had a rich theological background. They respected the teachings of the Bible as the will of God and tried their best to adapt them in their daily lives. They were what we call moral and respectable believers. Yet Jesus called them "money-loving Pharisees" and condemned them as "an abomination before God."

Hence, the rich in this parable refer to the Pharisees. Jesus uses a very exaggerated expression to describe the extravagant lifestyle of the very rich. In contrast, Lazarus, who is poor and has nothing to eat, is a homeless man who is sick and crippled and simply sleeps on the doorstep of the rich.

Jesus is here criticizing the rich man for not having compassion arise and for abandoning Lazarus at his own doorstep. Why did the rich man not help Lazarus? It is not just because the rich man was stingy and money hungry that he did not give Lazarus food and assistance, even though he had plenty of it. Lazarus is a poor, bedridden, crippled sick man with boils all over his body. He is what is called a religiously unclean person. He was considered by God to be a forsaken and cursed person.

According to the Gospel, the Pharisees, under the pretext of moral rectitude and obedience to God's law and teachings, showed no mercy or kindness to those they considered unclean. They looked at such people with white eyes and neglected them. They condemned them as cursed by God and would not approach them. They would not lay a finger on them.

As a result, it is those who are healthy, able to work and lead a normal life that the Pharisee approaches. They are people with money and good moral deportment. Jesus called this tendency "the Pharisee who loves money". And such a person was considered happy and blessed by God.

But as the second half of the parable reveals, the rich man was judged after his death. He is languishing in Hades (the world of the dead), where flames are burning. Jesus' first point here is that even if one is rich, lives a wealthy life, and lives a righteous life like the Pharisee, if one does not have love and mercy, it is not a blessed and happy life.

Please do not interpret what is being said in this parable as a postponement of what is to come in the afterlife. Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees before him. He is speaking to them because He is trying to change their current attitude toward life and their view of God.

In the intro to today's message, I introduced the three elements of our happiness: good physical and mental health, family, and money. Those are wonderful and important. But if that is all we have, then, according to Jesus' parable, we need to be careful. For "healthy in

body and mind, with family and money" is the same as the rich man of the parable. If you don't have compassion and love, woe to you!

What is it that we need to focus on for true happiness? We are told that poor Lazarus was taken to Abraham's bosom after he died. Abraham was not only called the father of faith, he was loved by God. He trusted God. He was called the friend of God who walked with God. In other words, true happiness is being in an intimate relationship with God. It is a friendship that loves, trusts, and walks with God, a life that has the love and mercy that God gives.

There are four factors that make us feel happy. First, the "Let's do it!" (self-actualization and growth) factor. I am using my strengths, becoming the person I want to be, and growing into a better me. Second is the "Thank you!" (connection and gratitude) factor. I have people who make me happy and care about me, and I have much to be thankful for, kindness and help. Third is the "I can manage!" (of positivity and optimism) factor. You are optimistic, have a change of heart, and create close relationships with others. Lastly, the "Be yourself!" (Independence and My Pace) factor. You don't compare yourself with others, you have yourself, and you don't get depressed when you know you can't do something. (From "The Mechanism of Happiness - A Practical - Introduction to Happiness Studies")

The four factors of happiness listed here are produced by an intimate relationship with God. Put aside for a moment what you feel would make you happy if you had this, and receive God's love and be assured of your identity as a child of God. Do you need to listen to the message of Jesus and free your heart from your money-loving Pharisee tendencies? True happiness comes from being embraced by the bosom of God.

2. Thinking about eternity

Today's Scriptures (the parables of Jesus) remind us of the need to look not only at our present earthly life, but also at the afterlife, eternity. It is wonderful to walk into a forest and look at every single tree. We look at every little flower and plant and marvel at their beauty and exquisiteness. But you will not know the true beauty of nature until you climb to the top of a mountain and see the grandeur of its peaks.

The Bible (Jesus) urges us to see life from God's eyes, from an eternal perspective. We tend to be preoccupied with the happiness of the life we have now. But there will come a time when you must stand before God. All of life's activities on earth will be examined and measured by the scales of Almighty and Holy God.

Is there anyone who feels antagonistic about a wealthy man being judged by God and suffering and faltering? He did not extend the hand of love and justice to poor Lazarus. He did not use the money he was given to save him.

Not only that, even in the afterlife, the rich man looked down on Lazarus. He treated him like his own servant. He begged Abraham to send him to quench his thirst and even asked him to send Lazarus to his family to make arrangements so that he would not suffer.

Rather, what the rich man should do here is to humble himself and admit that he was not loving and merciful. Shouldn't he repent for his sin of not helping Lazarus? But it is too late for that. The point Jesus is emphasizing here is the truth that you will be judged after death just as you walked on earth.

In other words, the rich man did not walk with a God who is merciful and loving and just. He did not live with a heart like a friend of God. If he lived with God with a godly heart, he could not have let Lazarus die. The rich man might say with his mouth that he believed in God, but deep down in his heart, he believed that happiness was not about being with God, but about being "healthy in body and mind," having a family, and having money. Therefore, God pulled him far away from God Himself, just as he had wished and lived.

More modern people might say that they are not sure if God really exists. For those people, I would like them to consider "Pascal's Wager". A simple summary would be this. Either God exists or he does not. Which do you bet on? - No, it is wrong to choose one or the other. The right thing to do is not to bet. Yes, but you have to bet. You have to bet, because you're on a boat.

The wager is your life. Let's say you bet on the existence of God. If you win, you will have eternal life and endless joy. Moreover, your earthly life will have meaning. If you lose the bet, you have nothing to lose. On the other hand, suppose you bet that God does not exist. In that case, even if you win the bet, your only gain will be happiness in this life. After death, you will be considered empty, so you have nothing to gain there. On the other hand, if you lose, the loss is too great. You will be judged by God, and you will lose all happiness in the next life.

My brothers and sisters, please review your lives from an eternal perspective. According to the Bible, helping the poor and needy with the time, money, and gifts you have available is just as important as sharing the gospel of Christ with those around you. This is not optional. This is why Grace City does the Bento Project.

3. Walk in the gospel

How then can we walk with God in His mercy and righteousness? We have touched somewhat on the rich man, but what about poor, poor Lazarus? What hope was there for the homeless Lazarus, who must have been disappointed in his poverty and pain?

In fact, Lazarus does not say a word in this parable. Of course, this is because Jesus' parable focuses on the rich, the money-loving Pharisees, but it would imply an oppressed condition

in which he was not even allowed to speak. In other words, he was deprived of the meaning of his social existence.

However, he was named "Lazarus" and was embraced by Abraham. This is very impressive compared to the rich man who has no name. Lazarus is remembered by God even if no one recognizes him. Even if no one calls his name familiarly, God gently calls him Lazarus. This is a manifestation of God's unconditional and unilateral grace that he is loved even though he can do nothing.

Whatever our circumstances, we are beloved daughters and sons of God. Your name is written in the Book of Life, the heavenly book that God himself wrote, the Lamb's Book of Life. Jesus said. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Then he continued.

Luke 10:21, "At that same time Jesus was filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, and he said, 'O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way.'"

God shows himself to, loves, and blesses the small, the oppressed, and the poor first. Therefore, Jesus was born as a poor babe and had no place to rest in his ministry.

Luke 9:58, "But Jesus replied, 'Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place even to lay his head.'"

Not only that, but Jesus, the Son of God, who loved, who spoke a message of blessing, who healed the sick, who saved people, was scorned, mistreated, and hurt, and even sacrificed his life on the cross. Because of Jesus, you will never be abandoned, no matter what your circumstances are.

What I want to draw your attention to is the way God performs love and mercy in our reality. We tend to expect God to work miracles of love and mercy. But God does not always work miracles. God performs real mercy, as He has since the Old Testament, when those who know His love generously share with those who need help and support them without asking for anything in return. Then all will taste God's love. They will know God's righteousness.

On the other hand, the rich man in Jesus' parable was pleased with his financial well-being, but ignorant of his spiritual condition. If he were even slightly aware of his poverty of heart and repentant, he would have a different attitude. If he realized that he was unloving, self-centered, and only concerned about his own happiness, he would have used his credit card for poor sick Lazarus.

He did not give generously to Lazarus because he did not acknowledge his sin and because he was not grateful for the grace that God had enriched him with. So, in a word, it was because he did not accept the grace of the gospel of Christ, because he did not understand it well, because he did not recognize it as the most important thing in life and the source of happiness. The gospel changes your heart and inspires your life.

Please, everyone, accept that your name is written in the Book of Life and that you are remembered by God. Review your life and repent with an eternal perspective. Whatever circumstances you are suffering from, you will never be abandoned according to Jesus of the Cross. If you receive God's love, walk with Him, and become His friend, you will experience happiness. Therefore, share generously what you have. And sing this praise with heartfelt thanksgiving.

My High Priest, who stands before the throne and continues to stand in my defense, whose name is love.

My name is engraved in your hands and in your heart, never forgotten, never to be forgotten.