



“Listening to God” Psalm 17:7-15; Luke 16:19-31

Introduction: How important is paying attention?

Living for Self or God?

One of the fundamental questions of our lives is: who are we living for? For ourselves or for God? In this parable, Jesus presents two contrasting figures. The first is a rich man, whose daily lifestyle was that of indulgent gluttony. His life was all about himself, about enjoying his wealth. The Greek here suggests that he enjoyed himself brilliantly and ostentatiously. In contrast, is the poor man, Lazarus. Lazarus is so poor that he has no home, no hope, no possessions and no health. These sores would have been painful ulcers, that also resulted in social and emotional alienation from others. He was so miserable that he could not even fight off the wild dogs who tried to feed off him. At that time, they had a custom that hunks of bread were used as napkins, to wipe off their hands and to throw away after eating. Lazarus then is part of the landscape, unacknowledged and abandoned by others, unlike the rich man.

Jesus speaks to us of how we must live for Him in Matthew 5:19-21, 24-5, saying, *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust can destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where you treasure is, there your heart will be also...No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”* How do you view your life and all that is in it- as yours or His? If this statement was true back then, how much more is it true today? William Wilberforce once said, *“prosperity hardens hearts. How soft is your heart this morning?”*

God's Comfort

Jesus shares of how God comforts those who trust in Him, saying *“Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted and you are in agony.”* The name Lazarus, in Hebrew is Eleazar, or God is my help. Because the rich man had chosen to live selfishly and superficially, he was in agony for eternity. This reiterates what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, when He said, *“But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.”* James reinforces this in 5:1-3, 5, saying, *“Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver has corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days...You have lived on earth in*

*luxury and self-indulgence.” Do we seek comfort in the things of this world or in God? Do we allow the world to get in the way of our need for God? Do we seek reassurance or comfort in things or money? In his book **Crazy Love**, Francis Chan says, “it is easy to fill ourselves up with other things and then give God whatever is left.” Is this true for us?*

Listening to God

Are we listening to God? What does it mean to listen? The rich man asked for Lazarus to go and to speak to his brothers, so they could avoid his mistakes and avoid his agony. Jesus reinforces that “*they have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them. If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.*” Jesus reinforced elsewhere, that obedience and love are intertwined. Jesus says, in John 14:15, “*if you love me, you will obey what I command.*” In John 10:27, Jesus says, “*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*” Biblically speaking, hearing is not just listening, but acting upon what we are told, on doing what we are commanded, in obeying God. Daniel Webster once said, “*The greatest thought that has ever entered my mind is that one day I will have to stand before a holy God and give an account of my life.*” What will the account of your life consist of: living for self or living for God; trusting in your own abilities or in His?