

March 10, 2013

Lesson 29: A Rich Man Ignores Lazarus



Luke 16:19-31

'There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with

Lazarus by his side. He called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames." But Abraham said, "Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us." He said, "Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house— for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment." Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them." He said, "No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead." '

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*Parable: A Rich Man
Ignores Lazarus*

Luke 16:19-31

The Big Story Truth: Last week we heard three stories with the point that God cares about every single person- and every sinner is sought after by God. Today, that message continues as we hear about God's care and concern for the poor. God cares about the poor and the lowly, the little ones and the ones that no one else thinks are important.

About this Scripture Passage: There are a few other verses that come in between our stories last week and where our story today begins. The topic of discussion in those passages are also money related. There is another story about a manager and funds. And there is a conversation in which the pharisees are identified as "lovers of money." Jesus says the famous line- "You cannot serve God and wealth." Today's story is about two men who have died. In the afterlife, Lazarus (the poor one) is with Abraham being comforted and well cared for. The rich man, though, is in a place of torment. Nevertheless, that doesn't stop him from trying to continue to boss. He wants Lazarus to be sent on his behalf. Apparently even Hades wasn't enough for him to get the point that he wasn't in charge any more! The parable reveals a truth that this man has missed in life and in death--- God loves and cares for the poor. Those who would seek to do God's will would see that message written all the way through Scripture. God's desire is for everyone to be cared for, for everyone to have enough to live. In the parable, Abraham replies that there is no hope for the rich man or for his brothers. But something interesting will happen just a few chapters later. Someone will rise from the dead. Jesus will rise from the dead. Perhaps there is hope after all.



For Your Reflection

1. When have you been shown compassion?
2. Does your faith influence how you use your money?
3. Do you hear this story as good news, challenge, or both?

Making the Connection: It's important for us even as adults to remember that this is a parable—a story that Jesus told. We don't need to take this story as a description of what heaven and hell will be like. What we do need to hear is the message that Jesus was giving that God cares for every single one of us. God cares for the poor. And God cares for the rich. In fact, God cares so much that Jesus would die and rise again so that nothing will separate us from God. Sin is what separates us from God. Sin is the chasm. If it were up to keeping the law to bridge the gap, we would be lost. But Jesus died and rose that the gap would be destroyed. God won't let sin stand between us.

Nevertheless, we are to repent of our sin.... and not caring about others, not taking care of those who need help, that is sin. It is a sin to be a person who is rich and capable of helping those in need and not do it. It is a sin to keep getting more and more for ourselves and ignore the needs of our neighbor. Without God's intervention, that would be enough to keep us out of God's kingdom forever. Thanks be to God for Jesus who destroys the chasm!

As disciples of Christ, we are called to begin living the kingdom of God even now. We are called to live as God would have us live even in this imperfect world. That means we are called to provide for the physical needs of the poor and the sick. We are called to share what we have! This is a message that is important for our kids to hear!

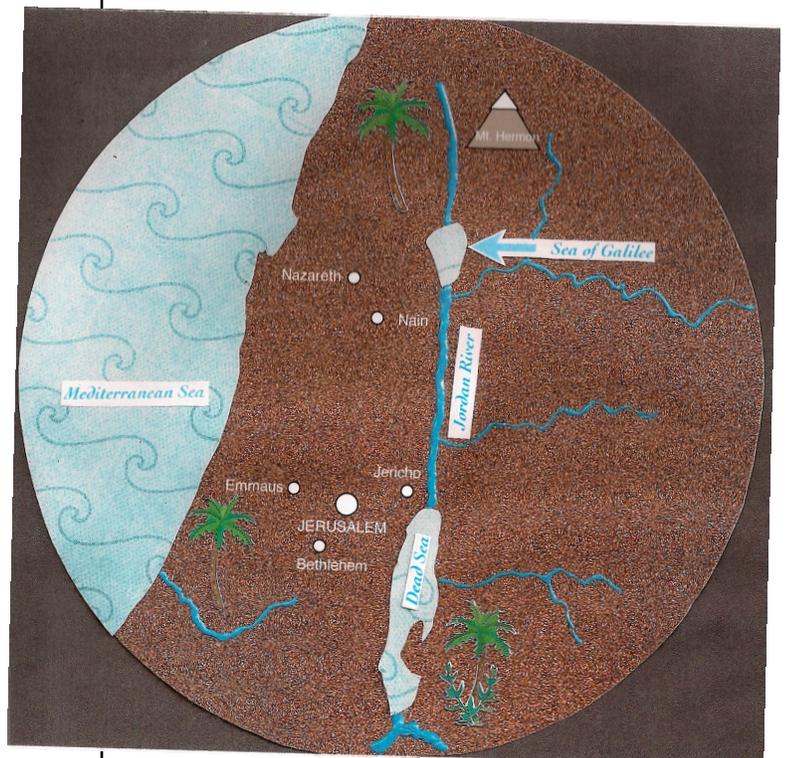
Where in the World Are We? We are still on our way to Jerusalem.... and we are getting close!



Great Big Word:

compassion

Thinking about other people's needs and acting with kindness and love.



Preschool/Early Elementary

Materials Needed:

- *A Silly Little Thing Called Love* Veggie Tales DVD
- Television/DVD player
- Spark Story Bible
- Paper and Crayons
- Smash Books (Early Elementary Only)

Before the Children Arrive:

Be sure to get the DVD set up so that it is ready to play at the Madam Blueberry section.

Experiencing the Story

Tell the children that you want to show them a movie to start your time together this morning. Show The Story of Madame Blueberry from *A Silly Little Thing Called Love* Veggie Tales DVD. Ask the kids some questions about the movie afterward. Use these to get you started:

1. Madame Blueberry kept wanting more stuff. But did the stuff make her happy?
2. In fact, because she got soooo much stuff, something sad happened, didn't it? What happened?
3. There was someone in the story though who was able to be happy even though she didn't have very much at all. Who was that?
4. What do you think would have happened if Madame Blueberry wouldn't have kept all the stuff for herself, but would have given it to someone who really needed it?

Tell kids: The part of the Bible that we are going to be talking about it church today is another story that Jesus told. The story that Jesus told was about two men. One was very, very rich. And the other was very, very poor. In fact, the

poor man was soooo poor that he didn't even have anything at all to eat. And he didn't have any place to live. Let's read this story in our Spark Story Bibles.

Read "The Parable of the Rich Man" (Spark Story Bible pages 383-389).

Activity: I Can Help!

Give each child the opportunity to draw a picture of themselves doing something to help someone else. It could be something that they plan to do or something that they have done in the past. Encourage them to write at the top "I can help!" Remind the children that it makes God very happy when we share what we have and help one another.

The early elementary group could choose to do this in their Smash Books.

Upper Elementary/Middle School

Materials Needed:

- Packing Peanuts
- Spark NRSV Bibles
- Markers
- Smash Books
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Before the Students Arrive:

Count out 100 packing peanuts. Set these in a big pile on the table so that the students see them when they first enter the room.

Experiencing the Story:

As students enter the room, draw their attention to the pile of packing peanuts (if they haven't already asked you what they are for!) Ask kids if they know how many people there are in the world. (Approx. 6 Billion). Say that today we are going to do a little experiment to talk about what the world would look like if those 6 billion were represented by just 100 people in a small town. Tell the kids that each peanut represents one person in this town.

(For each of the following statistics, ask kids to pick out that number of peanuts. So for the first one, ask a student to count out 59 peanuts, another 14, another 12... etc. Then when they have done that go on to say what category each of the piles represents. Then return the peanuts to one big pile for the next figure.)

If the World Were Represented by Just 100 People...

- 59 would be Asian, 14 would be from Africa, 12 would be European, 14 would be American (from North, Central, and South America), and 1 would be from the South Pacific.
- 49 would be women, 51 would be men
- 30 are children, 70 are adults
- 15 Speak Chinese, 7 English, 6 Hindu, 6 Spanish, 6 Russian
- Only 1 has a college degree.
- 20 do not have access to safe drinking water
- 6 have 59% of the world's wealth (all 6 of these come from the US)
- 20 use 80% of the world's energy

- 10 are individuals from countries that possess enough weapons to destroy everyone while 90 watch in fear of how they will be used
- 56 do not have sanitation (toilets)
- 7 have access to computers or internet
- 20 do not have enough to eat
- 1 is dying of starvation while 15 are overweight

After finishing demonstrating the above facts, have a conversation with the kids about the experience. If you need some questions to help prompt conversation, here are a few:

- What are you thinking about after seeing the world represented this way?
- What surprised you?
- If we were going to do this activity again and have one of those peanuts be you, which categories would you have been in?
- In terms of what resources you have, how do you compare to the rest of the world?

By virtue of living in the United States, we are among the richest people in the world. Even those of us who are poor by U.S. standards are often really very rich in comparison to world standards. In today's Bible passage, Jesus tells a story has something to say to those of us who are "rich" in one way or another.

Read the story together from Luke 16:19-31.

- Who in this story started out comfortable?
- Who in this story started out in pain and seemingly forgotten?
- Who ends up being comforted?
- Who ends being uncomfortable?
- What's separating them?
- The kingdom of God is often times the opposite of how things work here on earth. The poor are the ones who are given good things and the rich are suddenly without. Is that good news to you or does that make you uncomfortable? Why?
- A few chapters ahead someone will die and rise again. Who is that?
- What do you think it means that Jesus would tell this story while he is on his way to Jerusalem where he will die and rise?

Ask the kids to turn in their Bibles to Romans 8:33-39. Jesus died so that nothing would separate us from God's love... not even sin. God's desire is for all people to be loved and cared for and a part of his kingdom.

After reading this story, ask the kids to pretend that pile of packing peanuts is the world living in God's kingdom. What would it look like? (For example, Who is there? How do people treat one another? How do the rich and the poor interact?)

Activity:

Ask the kids to pick out a packing peanut that represents themselves. They can even use markers to decorate it if they wish. Have them attach their packing peanuts to a page in their smash book. Around their peanut have the kids draw, write, or cut magazine pictures to represent ways that they can make a difference in the world around them. Encourage them to think about how God has gifted them uniquely to make a difference in someone else's life. Encourage them to be creative and think deeply about what resources God has given them and just how much good they could do with what they have. This doesn't have to be about money--- encourage them to think about time, talents, interests, abilities, relationships, etc.