

Hell in Hell!

“²⁴ Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ ”– Luke 16:24 (NKJV).

1. A Passionate Plea.

The rich man made a passionate plea to Abraham: *“Father Abraham, have mercy on me!”*

He realized that he was in a place of perpetual suffering: *“..for I am tormented in this flame.”*

At this very moment of writing, I have a kettle of water on the fire which has reached boiling point. Upon seeing this I rushed towards the stove to turn it off. As I stretched my hands to turn the knob on the stove, I felt the hot steam against my face. Although I did not make direct contact with the flames on the stove, the steam from the water was very very hot.

Can you imagine what it is like to be in hell’s fire? Roasting ... not just for a few seconds, minutes or even an hour...but until the end of time that will never come. That was the plight of the rich man...and he made a desperate plea to ‘Father Abraham’ for help.

2. Remember When?

While he lived on earth, the rich man enjoyed all the worldly pleasures that money could have bought, including the best clothes and food. In hell, where his spirit lived on, the rich man was now in much distress. In that place, there was no access to his vast earthly wealth and other material possessions. He had nothing, and he now turned to Abraham for help.

“..send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue.”

Let us closely examine his request, and compare it to Lazarus’ own experience:

1. **What?** The rich man had a desire for water. Lazarus while he lived on earth had a desire for food;
2. **How Much?** The rich man wanted only a few drops of water to quench his thirst and to cool his tongue.

The beggar, Lazarus, wanted only the crumbs from the rich man’s table to satisfy his hunger.

3. **Who?** The rich man depended on the goodness of Abraham to heed his call for help, and to meet his needs. Ironically, he depended on Lazarus to do his bidding, and to help him.

Whilst on earth, Lazarus depended on the compassion of the rich man to hear his cry for help and to render assistance...which he did not do.

4. **Why?** The rich man found himself in dire straits without the luxury and comfort that his money once provided. He was repeatedly tormented in hell... bringing clearer meaning to the phrase: "There is no rest for the wicked!"

Whilst alive, Lazarus found himself in great need because of life's unfortunate circumstances.

It appears that the rich man, whilst in hell, was having a similar experience to that of Lazarus, the beggar. There are a few popular phrases that people use to describe this scenario:

- (a) "karma" – The online definition is as follows:

- *(in Hinduism and Buddhism) the sum of a person's actions in this and previous states of existence, viewed as deciding their fate in future existences.*
- *good or bad luck, viewed as resulting from one's actions.*

- (b) *"what goes around comes around."* This simply means that what you do to others, others will eventually do to you.

- (c) *déjà vu* - a feeling of having already experienced the present situation. The difference is that in the other place called hell, the roles were reversed and the rich man was now in a beggarly state.

5. Biblical Concept of Sowing and Reaping.

The biblical concept of sowing and reaping also supports this view that what we sow in this life we shall reap here or in the hereafter. Here are a few scriptures which support this notion:

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

Psalm 126:6 - "He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him."

The psalmist encourages those who sow in tears that one day they will reap with joy and laughter. The converse is also true in the context of our topic. Sometimes people laugh at others' misfortunes, only to later become the object of ridicule themselves. It is not a good idea to mock others or to make fun of a person's suffering.

Galatians 6:9; "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."

Luke 6:38; "Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

Hosea 8:7: "they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind."

The last two scriptures are in keeping with the law of nature which reminds us that we often reap more than we sow. Therefore, we should always be mindful of this fact when we interact with others. How we treat them will be the seeds that will bear much fruit in our lives.

6. The Rich Man's Plight

In hell, the rich man remained nameless. But now he was without his earthly fortunes. In the same way his physical body had disintegrated into dust upon his death, his power, prestige and possessions had no worth or currency (no pun intended!) in hell! The rich man was now a beggar – begging, just as Lazarus did, for a few drops of water! Also, he did not mind sucking the drops of water off Lazarus' finger in that place – the same Lazarus who was covered with sores which the dogs licked, and who was, no doubt, scorned by many.

"..send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue."

This tells us something very important about the afterlife. It demonstrates that in the afterlife – Lazarus did not look like his former self – he was not malnourished and covered in sores. Instead, he was healed and whole. His new form was spotless and perfect. That was what the rich man saw, and why he had no problem – if he could – with sucking the drops of water off Lazarus' fingertip.

7. Conclusion

We need to be so careful about how we treat others, especially the disadvantaged, vulnerable, poor and 'at risk' individuals that we may interact with on a daily basis. Let us not be blinded by our power, prestige and possessions so much so that we become callous in the way we treat the less fortunate.

As the scriptures demonstrate, and in particular with the account of the rich man and Lazarus, what we sow – in the way we treat others – is exactly what we will reap here and/or in the afterlife.

Finally, let us not become so focussed on building a fat earthly bank account, that when it is time for heavenly withdrawals of mercy, compassion and love, that we find our heavenly account starved. It happened to the rich man. It could also happen to you and to me. Be blessed.

Principles:

- 1. Like the rich man's experience, there is constant wailing and crying in hell for help.**
- 2. The rich man, with all his senses intact, was forever thirsty and in immeasurable distress;**
- 3. The biblical principle of sowing and reaping is at work daily in our lives. We must always strive to sow good thoughts, words and deeds.**
- 4. Be mindful that we always reap more than we sow.**
- 5. Do not ignore the opportunities that are available to us through repentance to receive God's forgiveness and mercy. When we die it is will be too late.**

Heavenly Father,

I thank You for reminding me of the existence of hell and the eternal pain and suffering that awaits everyone who dies without accepting Your gift of salvation. Thank You for Your mercy towards me, and lead me to that place of true repentance. Help me to remember that my thoughts, words, and deeds that I sow towards others, will yield an overabundant harvest for me. Teach me to sow love, compassion, forgiveness and the likes so that I too may receive likewise. In Jesus' name I pray with thanksgiving. Amen."

Memory Verse: *"they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind."* - Hosea 8:7.