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*Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread: The Wide and Gaping Landfill*

In our country we individually create 4.5 lbs. of waste per person per day. This equals 1642.5 tons of waste per person per year (stats from the EPA). Are we really praying for our daily bread? What do we mean by daily bread? To petition, give us this day our daily bread, gives us the opportunity to repent in those areas of our life that have skewed priorities.

Luke 16:19-31

**The Rich Man and Lazarus**

<sup>19</sup> “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. <sup>20</sup> At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores <sup>21</sup> and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

<sup>22</sup> “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup> In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. <sup>24</sup> So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’

<sup>25</sup> “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. <sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’

<sup>27</sup> “He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, <sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’

<sup>29</sup> “Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’

<sup>30</sup> “‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’

<sup>31</sup> “He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

**THOUGHTS ON THE TEXT**

The Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus is found only in Luke and is a study in deep contrasts. A unique feature with this is the fact that only in this story are any characters named. In this story, the beggar, Lazarus, is named and because of that makes personal the intensity of concern for the poor man. The effect of this is that God cares for the poor and is completely aware of the plight of the poor. The rich man here, nameless, faceless, could be any rich person.

***A Three-Part Invention***

1. The Situation Prior to Death (16:19-21)
2. The Situation in the Afterlife (16:22-23)
3. Comments About That Situation (16:24-31)
  - a. The discussion of getting Lazarus’ help;

- b. The attempt to warn the rich man's brothers

***The story begins with the scene of stark contrasts***

***The Rich Man***

is nameless, could be anyone  
Covered in purple linen  
Had everything in life  
Has comfort

***Poor Man***

is named: Lazarus  
Covered with sores and poverty  
Has everything in death  
Copes with torment and discomfort

Then death comes and the roles are reversed. The poor man is in a place of divine favor; a place of blessing—at “Abraham’s side.” The rich man, once robed in splendor is now “in hell,” or ‘Hades’. Lazarus is in, the rich man is out.

The rich man calls to the great patriarch of the Jewish faith and asks for Lazarus to be sent to give him some relief from the heat of his agony. Several points are worth noting: First, the heat of the torment may well depict the intense agony of what it means to be confined to the underworld, knowing that God exists and knowing that one is not in heaven. Secondly, the rich man knows who Lazarus is. During the time on earth, he knew the poor man was out there, had needs, and even knew his name. Third, the rich man’s view of Lazarus has not changed since his death. The rich man still views the poor man as someone beneath him, as someone who might be sent to give him relief. This reveals the lack of heart in the rich man.

*(Darrell Bock: The NIV Application Commentary on Luke p. 433)*

There is a further point of intensity here: While all of these details could be reversed in life on earth, here, in this scene of eternity, it is permanent. Abraham tells the rich man that what he is asking Lazarus to do for him now, in his death, he, himself could have done for Lazarus in his life. This is ironic and perhaps the point of the story.

The story ends with a cryptic note pointing to the crucifixion of Christ and the dark and tragic note about how humankind frequently misses the opportunities to serve that God sets before us.

**PREACHING THE STORY**

Commentators spend some time identifying “Heaven” and “Hell” and the correlating characteristics of these places. As usual, I’m not pointing to either place outside of our current reality. Sometimes I make my own hell right here by refusing to be attentive to the needs of others.

As we pray the prayer, “...Give us this day our daily bread...” we must consider what this means in the context of our relationships with others. When we ask questions about our skewed priorities, those priorities, I suspect, should always begin with the relational question. I think this story is less about how are we going to miss hell and more about how we shouldn’t miss the opportunity to provide for others. I suspect that the ‘wide and gaping Landfill’ that Paul Dean is referencing has something to do with the excuses we throw out which prevents us from being that hands and feet of Christ.

## NUGGET MEETING NOTES

Clarifying issues:

This Lazarus is not Martha and Mary's brother whom Jesus raised.

In the larger context, this is not just "bread for today" as in the story of the manna in the wilderness. It is also bread for the future.

The image of the landfill is very potent and serves as both a tactile and metaphorical reminder of all the junk that we accumulate.

Question: What junk gets in the way of our reaching out to others? "What's in your ~~wallet~~ landfill?"

In the story there is a chasm between Lazarus and the rich man. This leads us to ask the question: How do we get across the chasm between where we are and where God wants us to be?

In the story, the way that the chasm was bridged was through conversation. How do we open the conversation about how God's will being done through us now?

How do we bridge the gap Between us and the Lazarus' of the world.

Part of the issue is accumulation. What is in the way of us providing for the needs of others.

Faithful, authentic stewardship looks different than my 4.5 pounds of waste per day.

All of this is aimed at Feed My Starving Children.