

'Faith & Eternity' PART TWO:



The Rich Man and the Beggar - A story from Jesus in Luke 16:

Jesus was trying to correct some wrong attitudes and hearts among religious leaders, especially around the topic of money. So, he tells them a story about a rich man and a beggar. Read this story as the backdrop, and then we'll come back to it later.

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



²² "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴ 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.'

²⁵ “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. ²⁶ 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.’

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

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

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

³¹ “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.’”

We’ll come back to that story, later in the message.

Like the sick Lazarus in this story, and the leper Jesus made clean in Matthew 8, we see that Jesus cares not only for your soul and your spirit, but **he also cares about the state of your body.**

Matthew 4 describes a very common scene wherever Jesus went:

²³ *Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. ²⁴ News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them.*

So, **Jesus revealed the care and love of God for us.**

Wherever He went, He loved people, taught them how to live, healed and delivered them, and even fed them.

But here’s the sad part....

Jesus re-visited some of the towns that he had healed and found that although their bodies were now fixed, their hearts weren’t:

²⁰ *Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. ²¹ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in*

Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. ²³ And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. ²⁴ But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”
Matthew 11

Jesus reminds these people of towns and cities in the past, that had been punished for all the terrible things they had been doing. But He says that if those wicked cities had received all the miracles and grace that Jesus had been showing these current towns, those historical cities of evil, would've repented; changed their ways and done what was right.

Jesus was really disappointed that people had gladly received His love, healing and provision, *but* hadn't changed their ways, their hearts and actions.

Their bodies had been made right, but not their lives.

So often, we want to be seen as right in our opinion, and feel right in our body and emotions, but without being right in our heart.

Consider this common question: **“Are you alright?”**



Try asking that question to the mirror sometime today and see what runs through your thoughts:

“Are you all right?”

“Are you right? Or, are you wrong?”

Now you can imagine the man who was cleansed from leprosy, and all those people who were healed in Matthew 4, if you asked them “How are you? Are you alright?”

The would likely say: “Absolutely! I couldn't be better! Jesus just healed me”!

But when Jesus reviewed people's progress sometime after their healing, he was very disappointed in many towns and cities, because they had received healing and grace from Him, but they hadn't repented. Their hearts and lives hadn't changed.

Were they 'all right'?

How do you know if you're all right?

Jesus doesn't *only* want you to have a healed body and a healthy bank account. He wants you to be '**all** right': a right attitude, a right character, a right judgement, a right relationship with others, a right diet, right beliefs, a right response,a right life.

Have a listen to what Jesus said in John 3:

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

That's the amazing grace of God. As our Judge, he could condemn us any time He wants and He would be RIGHT, because we have done wrong.

But instead, God first sends Jesus to bless us, love us, heal us, serve us and give His life for us, so we can be saved from our sin and the penalty - the punishment for our sin.

Again, that's the Good News of the Good Friday story. Jesus hanging on the cross, was our substitute.

He died in our place, to pay the price for our guilt.

Jesus was putting our account with God RIGHT.

God didn't send Jesus to condemn you, but to save you.

How amazing is that?

But listen to the very next verse:

¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. ¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

Friend, right now, our world is afraid of the sickness that COVID19 brings. We want to be healed from this global disease, and Jesus is our healer. But **do we only want to be healed in the body, and not made 'right' in our soul?**

Light has come, but do we want light?

Because light reveals what is hidden in the dark...

Light will expose the secrets of our failure, our shame, our wrong thinking and wrong living.

Jesus said: *"people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil."*

We want God to make our bodies right, to make our bank accounts right, to make our minds feel right, to make our economy, our employment, our education, our families, our circumstances right.

But who cares about **being right** in our soul?

Who cares if we still have wrong desires, wrong attitudes, wrong morals, wrong judgements, wrong speech, wrong behaviours?

We prefer to keep those things hidden in the dark.

We can have all our external circumstances right, and to everyone else, we could even look 'all right'.

But **who can make us right, deep down?**

Who can remove our sin, and make our heart right, so we live right, speak right, do right, think right and be right?

This concept of being 'right', is part of what the bible calls: **"righteousness"**.

God is righteous. He not only does what is right, but He is right, in thought, will and action.

How many of us can say we are righteous? That we are always right in what we do, what we say, what we think and what we desire...

Remember Jesus' verdict in John 3:19

"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil."

We want our bodies and our circumstances to be right, but do we want our lives to be right?

Because if you want to know Jesus, and have an ongoing relationship with Him - **He is light**. And light, by its very nature, reveals what is hidden in the dark.

Do you want to change?

Do you want to be right, or just *look* right?

When one day, you stand before the Righteous God, the one that judges the actions *and the heart*, there will be no fooling God on who is righteous and who is unrighteous. That's what the rich man discovered in the story in Luke 16.

We don't set that standard, God does.

Now, back to the story of the poor beggar and the rich man in Luke 16. They both had lived, and they both had died. They both had an opportunity at life. They both could choose how they thought, spoke, and behaved. They could choose to do what was right in God's eyes, or...not.



After they had died, they discovered that **the way they lived life on earth, determined where and how they would live, after they died.**

There is life after death.

The rich man, who was very satisfied with his standard of living, was now in a place of **suffering**, while the poor, sick beggar Lazarus, was in a place of **comfort**. The rich man, didn't want his family to suffer the same consequence as he had, so he calls to Abraham whom he could see across the great divide:

Luke 16

²⁷ "...I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, ²⁸ for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

²⁹ "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'

In other words, they had the laws and direction provided by God in the Old Testament of our Bible. If they just follow those laws, they'll be fine. But the rich man knew they weren't following God's laws. He said:

³⁰ *"No, father Abraham," he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'*

³¹ *"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.'"*

The rich man, on the other side of the grave, knew that his life on earth wasn't right. He knew God's judgement of him was right.

So noticed what he wanted for his brothers in vs 30: he wanted them to 'repent'. That is, to turn from living wrong, and instead, living right: to **be right - righteous**.

One of the greatest problems in our modern thinking, is deciding that we set the standards for what is right, and what is wrong.

That whatever **we** decide is right for us to think and desire and do, is ok.

We might even think we are right in how we judge others for what they say, think and do. But for ourselves, we think we're: "All right".

None of us are God.

None of us get to decide the standard for what is right and what is wrong.

None of us can even say, that we are truly 'right'.

Surely our righteousness, when brought under the illumination of the light of God's glory, will be found to be lacking, diseased, failed, poor, ...wrong.

In the book of Romans, chapter 3 vs23 it says:

'For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.'

So even if you go to church, give money away, have a good job, and look all right to other people, that's not the standard of righteousness that God uses.

Jesus is the standard.

He did right, spoke right, thought right, desired right, lived right, even when people mistreated Him and rejected Him. Jesus is righteous.

Your life needs to match Jesus' righteousness.

That's the standard God uses.

And if that scares you, good.



Because life on this tired piece of rock, is very, very temporary. **You were made for eternity** – so we must make sure in this life, that we've got it RIGHT.

Let's head back to Romans 3 and see the fuller context to verse 23:

²² *We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.*

²³ *For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.*

²⁴ *Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.* ²⁵ *For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.*

Romans 3 (NLT)

Even though 'all have sinned' - none of us are righteous in our own effort and history, YET, **God has made a way for you to be made RIGHT.**

And it's as simple as putting our faith in Jesus Christ.

That is, instead of trusting our own goodness and rightness, we acknowledge that we're not good enough. We're not right.

But Jesus is, and He has taken our sin and failure, and **given us His life and righteousness.**

Today, I can tell you that **I am right with God:** righteous in His sight.

Because I'm a good man? No way. I'm nowhere near 'right' enough.

But I've acknowledged my sin and failure, and I've accepted Jesus' substitution on my behalf. He has taken my sin and my sin's punishment, and given me His righteousness as a gift. And I absolutely receive and treasure HIS righteousness.

That's what I put my trust in for this life, and the life to come.

2 Cor 5:21

'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.'

Try reading it this way:

God made Jesus who had no sin, to be sin for ME, so that in Him, I might become the righteousness of God.

So, today, I hope it's clear. There is a way for you to be made RIGHT, and like the beggar Lazarus, one day, when your time on earth is done, you will be welcomed into heaven with celebration.

If you want to be confident about your life before God, and what happens after you die, this is what you need to do:

'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.' 1 John 1:9

That's our STARTING place.

From there, we must choose to follow Jesus each day, in *His* righteousness and work with His Holy Spirit in the transforming of our thinking and living to be like Jesus.

That life, like Jesus, is one filled with light, with joy, with peace, with confidence, with purpose and with an eternal hope.

You can have the guarantee, and the joy of knowing that one day, like Jesus, your dead body can be resurrected into a heavenly body that will live forever, in a new world, with Jesus and the saints.

This earth was only ever temporary. It's the place we are trained and where we choose to live according to God's ways – or not...

You were created to live eternally in God's Kingdom as a son or daughter.

Death is not our end. It's simply the ending of our life in this age, and the beginning of our life in the age to come. And COVID19 has no power over life in heaven, or the new world in the age to come! There's no sickness there!

The question is, **where do you place your faith?**

Is it in your *righteousness*?

Are you hoping you're good enough according to *your* standards?

Or have you placed your faith in who Jesus is, and what Jesus did on the cross for you?

True righteousness is only **a gift** we receive **by faith** in Jesus Christ.

Then, we must live according to that righteousness, and replace all our standards, with His standard.

You all right?

I'm not. But I'm a work in progress! I've been gifted righteousness in Jesus, and am slowly being made more and more like Jesus, as I follow and trust Him.

Who do you trust today?

If you want to join me in this journey of righteousness, and to live confidently with hope for eternity, start by doing what 1 John 1:9 says and join us as we learn from Jesus, and follow Him together.

Here's a prayer you can start with:

"God, my Creator and Judge, I have sinned and my life isn't right with you.

I've chosen to live by my own standards and have ignored yours.

Please forgive me because Jesus took my sin on the cross.

Cleanse me from all unrighteousness.

Fill me with your powerful Holy Spirit, and help me to live according to your ways.

Right now, I receive your forgiveness, I receive Your Spirit, and I receive your

peace. I no longer fear death or judgement. Jesus, I trust you with my life.

Help me follow your lead and learn from you." Amen."

From here:

1. **Seek God** and His voice by reading the Bible each day, 'listening' to what He teaches and speaks to you through the words. Start in Luke.
2. **Share this message** with someone else, so they also can know hope as you have found.
3. **Connect with a community** of worshippers through a local church, and ask them to help you grow in your journey with God. Find one that instructs in what the Bible says, helps others come to know Him, and worships God with enthusiasm!

God's peace and grace be upon you.

Ps. Nigel Ripley

Written by Pastor Nigel Ripley

www.legacycommunity.nz

Please email our office if you would like a copy of parts 2 and 3 in this series:

office@legacycommunity.nz

