

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

If you had to introduce yourself using only one word (not your name), what would it be and why?

## Understanding:

Why do you think Jesus chose to name Lazarus but not the rich man in this parable?

How does the concept of “summum bonum” (highest good) relate to this parable?

## Application:

In what ways might we be tempted to find our identity in things other than God?

## Next Steps:

Practice explaining the concept of “summum bonum” to one another using a modern example.

## Missional Living:

How might understanding this parable change the way we interact with those who are materially poor or suffering?

In what ways can we share the message of finding true identity in Christ with others?

*Finally, what did this parable leave you to think about?*

SEPTEMBER 22, 2024

# PARABLES

2: RICH MAN & LAZARUS

THE SUMMUM

BONUM LUKE 16:19-31

## TODAY'S VERSES:

Luke 16:25

Matthew 10:28

Luke 16:19-31

Isaiah 53:11

Colossians 1:17



## 2: RICH MAN & LAZARUS

### THE SUMMUM BONUM LUKE 16:19-31

Parables are (very broadly), “a fictitious narrative that would generally refer to something that might naturally occur, by which spiritual and moral matters might be conveyed.” There is no end to the speculation that centers on the parable that Jesus tells today. People get caught up in various theories, asking, “Is it really a parable or a true story? Is Jesus trying to tell us what the afterlife looks like? Is this a commentary about wealth and poverty being reversed in the future life?”

This is not a parable (primarily) about riches and poverty, though there are many things in Luke 16 that can relate to how we see our money and stuff. There is more going on and we must take a step back and look at the picture language and ultimately Jesus’ own work in the world.

**Only One Character in the Parable Has A Name** Many fail to realize the that the main contrast of the parable is not that one was rich and one was poor, that one goes to “heaven” and the other to “hell,” but only Lazarus gets a name. The name *Lazarus* means **God is my help** or **God is my salvation**. Lazarus has a name, **because** God is his help. The rich man has nothing but the designation “rich man.”

**The Highest Good** Philosophers for centuries have talked about the *summum bonum*...“the highest good.” The rich man had chosen his *summum bonum*. Abraham, in the parable, says to the rich man, “You’ve had your ‘good thing.’” How do you determine what your *summum bonum* is? Is there anything in your life that you feel like, if you lost it, you would have no reason to live? That’s your *summum bonum*—your good thing (or as Jesus says, “your treasure”).

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**The Next Life** Jesus shows us some realities of what Hell looks like as it simultaneously destroys us and reveals who we are. We are told that as long as we are on this earth, no matter how hard we try to escape God or rebel against Him, we never completely get away from Him. As a result, we are always kept somewhat intact because we are still able to love, think, create, communicate, and forgive. Hell is a place where those who have wanted to get away from God finally get away and completely break down.

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**Which of the Two Men Are You?** This is a parable about the focus of our lives. Who, or what, is our help? We are called to make Jesus our summum bonum. Only in Him do we receive a name that lasts forever.

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The parable’s emphasis is less about literal wealth and more about where we place our trust and find our identity. It challenges listeners to examine their own lives and consider whether they’re living in “suburbs of hell” or “suburbs of heaven” based on where they’re placing their ultimate hope and trust.