

# SERMONS,

PREACHED IN

THE PARISH CHURCH OF GLASBURY,  
BRECKNOCKSHIRE,

AND

ST. JAMES'S CHAPEL, CLAPHAM,  
SURREY.

BY

THE REV. CHARLES BRADLEY,  
VICAR OF GLASBURY.

A NEW EDITION.

LONDON:

HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO., AND T. HATCHARD.

1854.

## SERMON XII.

### THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

ST. LUKE XVI. 22.—“It came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom; the rich man also died.”

THESE words bring before us a very solemn portion of scripture—a parable only, it is true, a mere picture; but then it is a picture drawn by one who had lately come from the eternity it unfolds, and intended by him to shadow forth realities in that eternity, and those very realities among which you, and I, and every child of man, must soon be mixed. May God grant that the recollection of this fact may make us serious while we are examining it! May it cause us to feel, for one short hour at least, like dying men!

We cannot notice every part of the parable. Its general tendency will be evident, if we confine ourselves to this simple view of it—first, the resemblance between the two persons who are the subjects of it, and, secondly, the difference between them, viewed in connection with the grounds of this difference.

I. 1. The parable speaks of a rich man and a poor man; and *the resemblance* between them may be traced, first, in *the mortality of their bodies*. They were both men, sinful men, and consequently dying men. No sooner is it said that “the beggar died,” than it is added, “the rich man also died.”

And thus must end the history of us all. Whether we are poor or rich, in sickness or in health, in trouble or in joy, this will soon be said concerning each of us, this will be the finishing, the winding up, of our earthly history, “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” One of us may die here and another there; one at this age and another at that; “one in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet, another in the bitterness of his soul, never eating with pleasure;” but we shall “all lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover us.”

2. These men resembled each other also in *the immortality of their souls*. They both went into eternity when they died, and into eternity we are all hastening. The soul of the poorest amongst us is as immortal as the soul of the richest. It is of precisely the same value in the estimation of God, and the heir of the same boundless existence.

It is hard to believe this. Show me a being enriched with intellect and refined by cultivation; let me see him capable of measuring the stars, or laying open the secrets of nature, or delighting his fellow-men by the creations of his fancy, or moving and swaying them by the force of his reasoning—I can easily believe such a mind destined to live forever. Or again let

me think of the cross, and behold a fellow-sinner, however low in understanding or mean in station, cleaving to that cross; let me regard him as set apart by the everlasting Jehovah for his own, bought with the price of Christ's precious blood, and made the temple of the Holy Ghost; let him appear elevated above the world in spirit and conduct, and though treading the earth, walking with a high and a holy God, and holding communion with heaven—I can believe without an effort, that there dwells within that man a spirit born for eternity. But whatever my feelings may say, the veriest trifler on the face of the globe is as immortal as he; the idolater will live as long, and so will the most sordid lover of the dust within these walls. As for intellect or science, it will not add a span to our duration. The man whom we may think scarcely possessed of a human soul, who is treated as a brute beast, and degraded by the treatment he receives almost to a mental level with the brute beast, the most abject African that groans unpitied in western bondage, has a soul as immortal as a Newton, or a Milton, or a Locke; he will live as long as a David or a Paul. We may elevate or degrade our spirits, raise them through grace to Jehovah's image and Jehovah's happiness, or sink them down to the pollution and wretchedness of hell; but their duration is fixed; not a moment, not the twinkling of an eye, can we add to it; we cannot take away from it one atom of existence.

And observe too, that this eternity whither we are all going, is no far distant world which the disembodied soul will be ages or years in reaching. It is a world so near us, that the moment death separates the soul from the body, we shall be there, inhabitants of that world, entering into its pursuits and sharing its joys or pains. This fact is plainly intimated in the parable. Lazarus dies, and is carried at once "into Abraham's bosom." The rich man also dies. He is represented as closing his eyes one moment on earth, and then opening them the next in another world.

3. To these two points of resemblance between these men, we may add a third, not indeed absolutely expressed here, but, like the fact we have just alluded to, evidently to be inferred—*accountableness to God*. Though nothing is said of any trial or account which they underwent, the different situations in which we find them in eternity, implies one. It was not chance, which placed them where they are. They went thither from a bar of judgment.

And judgment, brethren, is just as certain to you and me, as death or eternity; it is as determinately and inevitably appointed. As surely as these frames of ours will one day lie cold in death, so surely shall we "stand at the judgment-seat of Christ," so certainly must "every one of us give account of himself to God."

It follows then, not only that we shall live forever in a world to come, but that our condition in it will depend on what has passed in the few fleet-

ing years of our mortal life. This life is but a span long, a mere pittance of existence; short as it is, we trifle with it, and throw away many of its hours as though those hours were worthless; but what is this short life? this troubled, feverish dream, so trifling while it lasts and so quickly ended? It is the beginning of an existence that will never end. And not only this, every moment in that existence will be affected by what has passed in this beginning of it. The consequences of our words and actions are not terminated at the grave; they do not affect the threescore years and ten of life only; they are connected with scenes which will take place millions of years to come; we shall be reaping their fruits ages and ages after the mountains are removed and the earth consumed. The sun will cease to rise and the stars to shine, but never, while eternity lasts, will the things we have thought and done today, and yesterday, and the days that were before them, become unimportant. Trifles we may deem them all on this side the grave, but no sooner does our foot tread on the other side, than their real character will come out; we shall see them as they are, the seeds of everlasting anguish, or the forerunners of everlasting glory.

The rich man then resembled Lazarus in the mortality of his body, the immortality of his soul, and his accountableness to God.

II. Let us proceed to notice, *the difference between these two men, with the grounds or reasons of it.* They differed in two points.

1. In *their earthly portion.* The difference between them in this respect was indeed so great, that they hardly seemed to belong to the same order of beings. One was at the very height of worldly prosperity, enjoying, or at least possessing, all that could minister to an earthly body or gratify an earthly, sensual mind. He “was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.” But look at his palace gate. There lies forsaken and despised “a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fall from the rich man’s table;” so poor, that he wants the necessaries of life; so starving, that he lies begging for the refuse of his neighbour’s table; so well nigh naked, that he cannot cover the wounds which disfigure his famished body; so friendless, that when he is cast at the rich man’s gate, he has none to relieve or help him; dogs his companions, and the food of dogs, not the food he possesses, but the food he craves. How great a contrast! Where shall we find its *origin?*

We know, brethren, where our earthly minds would prompt us to look for it. We are ready to say, “It must lie in the character or conduct of these men. That rich man has faithfully served his God, and is rewarded of him; that poor man has sinned grievously against him, and therefore groans and suffers.” But one main design of this parable is to condemn such reasoning as this. It warns us against judging of men’s character by men’s condition. It tells us that ease and riches are no certain marks of God’s favour, and

poverty and suffering no sure signs of his displeasure. It tells you who are rich, that your prosperity in your ways is perfectly consistent with God's hatred of those ways; and it tells you who are poor, and troubled, and perplexed, that notwithstanding all that is grieving you and bearing you down, you may be as dear to God as the throne he sits on. That diversity of condition, which we may wonder at but cannot alter, which has prevailed more or less in every age and nation notwithstanding every attempt to put an end to it, that diversity must be traced to the sovereign will of God. And he suffers, or rather he establishes it, because it is conducive to our welfare and his own glory.

It serves to show us, among other things, *the poverty of the world and the all-sufficiency of God*. One man, with all the earth can give at his command, pampered, and bowed down to, and half worshipped; and yet, in the midst of all this, dissatisfied, restless, and aching—how does he make us feel the poverty, the nothingness, of all created good! While another man, destitute of everything the world deems good, and yet peaceful in his destitution, thankful, and almost happy, blessing the Lord that afflicts, and kissing the hand that scourges him;—what does he show us? He shows us this, that if we have the grace of Christ in our hearts, we need covet nothing more; we have enough; we have found that out of created things, which no created things could supply. He shows us this, that an infinite God is a better portion than ten thousand worlds.

Besides, this diversity of condition, this mixture of poverty and riches on the earth, answers a further end—it *proclaims to thoughtless man another world*.

Look at that daring contemner of the Lord Jehovah. He tramples on his laws, he despises his gospel; and yet he prospers. Affluence and ease are his companions all his days, and when he dies, he dies before any visible token of the divine indignation has touched him. But look at that faithful servant of God. Not a year of his existence passes without some struggle. The whole of it is one continued effort to bear up under the pressure of difficulty and suffering. He carries about with him, while he lives, the visible traces of a man of sorrows; and when he dies, he takes down to the grave a patient, but a halfbroken, worn out heart. “And where all this time is a righteous God?” asks the soul. “Where his promised care of his own, and where his oft threatened vengeance against transgressors?” “They lie,” says the soul again, “in another world. There is a future state of retribution. There must be a world in which the just Governor of the universe will assert his justice, will vindicate his character, and render to the sons of men according to their works.” And this is another truth enforced in this parable.

2. The two men it speaks of differed in *their eternal condition*.

Look at the state of Lazarus in the invisible world. This is very briefly

described. "It came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." What a transition! from the cold ground to the arms of angels! from the rich man's gate to the gate of heaven! now scarcely able to walk a miserable earth, and now riding on the wings of cherubim, and soaring upwards to the regions of light and happiness!

And what place is the man holding in these glorious regions? Is he laid down at the entrance of heaven, allowed to occupy the same post at the door of God's house, that he occupied before at the rich man's gate? Had this been all, his latter end would have been blessed. But he is admitted, not to the gate only, but into the palace of heaven; he sits down a welcome and honoured guest at the table of his Lord.

Heaven is often spoken of in the scriptures as a sumptuous banquet. It is called "a feast," "a great feast," "the marriage supper of the Lamb." Now among the eastern nations, it was usual to recline on couches during their meals; and these were so situated, that each person appeared to be leaning on the bosom or shoulder of the person next to him; indeed, at a crowded table, he must actually have leaned on it. Thus at the last meal our Lord took with his disciples, John is spoken of as "lying on his bosom;" that is, he was sitting next to him. When therefore it is said that Lazarus was carried into Abraham's bosom, we are perhaps to understand that he was placed, as a mark of honour, next to Abraham himself; that he was not only received into glory, but into the very highest degree of glory; removed to the greatest possible distance from all his former miseries, and lifted to a height of blessedness which more than compensated all his woes; enjoying in the very sight of God, at his own right hand, that "fulness of joy" which has satisfied God himself through all generations.

But turn now to another scene. "The rich man also dies;" and what follows? He is "buried," so buried as to render his funeral worthy of record. Pomp attends him to his grave, and even there perhaps does not forsake him; some stately monument speaks his praises. But while this is going on, while the solemn pageant is darkening the streets, and the flattering inscription is chiselling on the tomb, where is the man himself? Where is that part of him, which is still alive to consciousness and thought? In a world of misery. "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." And then the parable goes on; "He seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. And 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."

This representation is very simple, but its simplicity serves to render it the more appalling. It proves that the state of this lost sinner was familiar to our Lord's contemplation, and consequently that it was not a state of wretchedness peculiar to this one man, but the condition of all the lost.

The first circumstance that arrests us in it, is *the acuteness*, the extremity, of his suffering. It is “torment,” and torment in the midst of devouring “flames;” anguish of the most excruciating and terrific kind, and also in the most terrific place; for it is torment in “hell,” in a world created to strike terror in all other worlds; to glorify the justice of God by its miseries, as heaven glorifies his goodness by its joys. The earth, in comparison with it, is a world of blessedness. The bitterest woes of earth would be welcomed in it as a relief and suspension of misery. They give us no idea of its horrors. Were we at this moment enduring them all, we should have no more conception of the wretchedness of hell, than the man who has looked only at the turbulence of a swollen rivulet, has of the ocean’s fury. It is as un-earthly, as incomprehensible, in its misery, as heaven is inconceivable in its bliss.

And its suffering is without alleviation. It is *pure*, unmixed suffering. In this respect also it surpasses all worldly misery. Here the most wretched have some intervals of repose, and the most afflicted some alleviations of their sorrow; but in the eternal world, this mixture comes to an everlasting end. The happy are completely happy, the wretched completely wretched. This man is not only in a state of torment, he has nothing to mitigate his torment. A few days before he might have obtained heaven by one real prayer for heaven; he asks now for a drop of water, he cries and cries aloud for a shadow of comfort, a momentary mitigation of his pain, and he supplicates this for mercy’s sake, but it is denied him; no mercy comes. O what must be the misery of that condition, in which so light a mercy should be the object of such fervent prayer! and what its awfulness, that in the universe of a God of love, such a prayer should be heard and yet not granted!

Observe also that the state of this sufferer is represented to be as *hopeless*, as it is wretched. His misery is eternal misery, and he is forced to receive into his soul a consciousness of its eternity. “Between us and you,” says Abraham, “there is a great gulph fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.” How fearful the strength of this language! There is “a gulph “between heaven and hell; and this gulph is “a great gulph;” and this great gulph is not an accidental, temporary separation, it is “a great gulph fixed,” an immoveable, an eternal, as well as impassable barrier between misery and joy. On earth we have nothing like this. There is indeed a great distance between the enemies and the friends of God, but no gulph, no barrier. You who are “afar off, may be brought nigh;” you may come, and come when you will, from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of Christ; you may pass this very hour from death unto life: but when once eternity is entered on, your state is fixed. No effort, no time, can change it. A wretched spirit can never become a happy spirit; no, nor ever be reconciled to its misery, or

be worn out by it, or feel it less. Here the capability of the soul to bear anguish sometimes amazes us; we marvel that nature does not fail underneath its burden; but our present strength is no more to be compared with our future powers of endurance, than the miseries of time with the woes of eternity. We know what follows. We sometimes say, there is no hope in heaven, but we may say with much greater truth, there is no hope in hell. Hope has never yet entered that dreary world, never thrown a single ray of light into its darkness, never even risen for one moment in any one heart. It is a kingdom of pure, unmingled despair.

It is obvious that two states so widely different as those we have thus examined, must be traced to some great and essential difference in the persons who are found in them. They are still in the dominions of a God of justice, and no slight dissimilarity of character would lead him to assign to them such opposite portions. And yet, on the first view, the grounds of this diversity in their condition are not apparent.

We must not ascribe it to the difference that existed in their former condition on earth, to the riches of the one or the poverty of the other. It is true, as a part of this parable intimates, that wealth, in consequence of our abuse of it, may aggravate our wretchedness in a future world, and that a poor man, if a man of God, may reap in eternity the blessed fruits of his sufferings in time; but as for want or misery saving the soul, as for pain or disease opening heaven, or widening the path to it, or even cleansing us from one of the transgressions which keep us out of it, it is the strangest mistake, the wildest delusion, that ever misled a sinner's mind. If any of you are making such a use of this scripture; drawing this conclusion from it, that you will be happy hereafter because you are wretched now; I may tell you, brethren, without any risk of saying more than the truth, that you might as well expect your tears to keep death away from you, or your winding-sheet to restore you to life when dead, or your coffin to become a chariot to carry you to heaven. Lazarus was not saved because he was poor, and half famished, and sick. At the gate of the mansion, he needed the blood of Christ to redeem him, as much as the rich man needed it in its stateliest hall; and there is not a beggar on the earth, who does not need it, and need it as urgently and greatly in his hut, as any king on his throne. If you are poor, and know nothing in your poverty of the "unsearchable riches of Christ;" if your want, instead of leading you to God, serves only to make you murmur against him; if you are poor and prayerless, poor and even thoughtless; wretched as you may now deem yourselves, your present days are your best; your present lot, with all its miseries and hardships, is the happiest you will ever know. Death will be to you no happy release. It will be a passing out of the bearable sufferings of time into the unbearable woes of eternity. Not one word of comfort does this scripture speak to such as you.



It says to you as well as to the richest of your neighbours, “Repent.” “Flee from the wrath to come.” “Prepare to meet your God.”

Nor must we trace the difference in eternity between these two men to any flagrant crimes or peculiar wickedness in the rich man’s conduct. There is not a word in the history to sanction such a notion. Not a single sin is laid to his charge. True, he was rich; and so were Abraham, and Solomon, and David, and a thousand more, who are now in heaven. True also, he was well clothed; so are the lilies of the field, which are clothed by God himself. True again, “he fared sumptuously,” but there is nothing wrong in taking the gifts of providence and enjoying them also, so that we take them with moderation and enjoy them with thankfulness; and we read here of no abuse or excess.

We are very prone, brethren, to ascribe great sins to the persons whom our Lord condemns in his parables, and by this means we turn away their force from ourselves, and lose much of the meaning and instruction they were intended to convey. He seldom speaks of such characters. He generally describes what we should call blameless, almost virtuous men; and then endeavours to strike an alarm in our minds, by showing us these men rejected by him and condemned. He has done so here.

The true cause to which the eternal misery of this rich man must be traced, undoubtedly lies in this one thing—forgetfulness of God. We gather this from the general tenor of the parable, the occasion on which it was spoken, and the light thrown on it by comparing it with another parable of a similar tendency, the parable of the worldly-minded possessor of lands and corn, in the twelfth chapter of this gospel. Lazarus, in his poverty, felt his need of God, implored his aid, and centred all his happiness in him. His wealthy brother seldom or never thought of God. He sought his rest and happiness at a distance from him. He made the world, his stately mansion, his gorgeous apparel, his sumptuous fare, his all. There lay the ruinous evil, not in his good things themselves, but in the hold which he suffered them to take of his thoughts and heart. And beware, brethren, lest your good things first engross and then ruin you. They will assuredly perish, but before they do so, they may cause you to perish. Innocent, harmless, lawful, in themselves, only seek your main happiness in them, and there needs no angel or spirit to tell us what will become of you in an eternal world. This scripture says as plainly as though one rose from the dead to declare it in your ears, you are in the broad way to destruction; and unless you see your danger and flee to the cross for deliverance, this rich man’s acute, unmixed, endless misery will eventually be your own. Talk not of your harmlessness. Ask not what crimes you have committed or what vengeance you have deserved. Rivet your thoughts for this day to this scripture. Discover, if you can, this wretched worldling’s crimes. The same God that judged him, will judge

you, judge you by the same law, measure you by the same standard; make no more allowance for your situation and circumstances, than he made for his; assign you, if you die as you have lived, to the same torment and despair.

We have now gone through the parable as far as we proposed. You must have felt all along, that the eternal realities it has brought before you, are of the very utmost moment. You must have felt too that, in comparison with these, all other things are of no moment whatsoever. Indeed who is not ready to say at the close of this subject, *How poor, how utterly insignificant in value, are those things which man's foolish heart often prizes the most!*

We know but too well what these are. They are the things which this rich man possessed; the things which constitute the pride, if not the happiness, of many of ourselves, and are the desire and admiration, perhaps the envy, of many more. But what can they do for us? They may supply a few of our wants, and gratify many of our wishes; but look at our situation and prospects. We have a mortal body, an immortal, never dying soul; we are every one of us going to the judgment-seat of Christ. Can these things save us from the grave? Can they blot out the sins of a life of folly? Can they go with us into eternity, and avert the wrath of a forgotten God? No; they can do no more than amuse and degrade the soul for a few fleeting years, and then leave it to perish. What then is the real value of this wealth, this splendour, this rank, in the pursuit of which the whole world is toiling, in the possession of which some of you are glorying? Ask the dying man for an answer; or rather ask him who stands by the bed of the dying, or the cold frame of the lifeless. He can scarcely find words to meet your question. He cannot tell you how unsubstantial, how trifling, how completely unworthy of his affections, all these objects of earthly desire appear to him. A shadow could hardly seem to him less real. And he is the man who sees these things as they are. The view he takes of them in these moments of soberness, is the correct view; it is that which, either in this world or another, will ultimately be your own. They may have for a season their use and worth, but they are no more to be compared with the riches of heavenly grace, than the lightest chaff with the wheat, than the body with the soul, than time with eternity.

And who has not been reminded today of another obvious and affecting, but oft forgotten truth? *How different are the consequences of death to different men!*

We are now seated within the same walls, all wearing the same form, sharing for the greater part in the same joys and sorrows, burdened with the same cares, and polluted with the same sins; but look forward a few years, and how amazing the difference that has taken place between man and man! Some of us are in a world of peace, with every sorrow gone, every

fear at rest, every hope realized; so pure, that a holy God looks on us “with exceeding joy;” so unutterably happy, that even in heaven we wonder at our happiness. But where are others of us? In a land where we shall see them no more; as wretched as we are happy; completely and forever lost. And is a dissimilarity like this, so great, so lasting, and yet so near, a matter of indifference to us? Instead of asking where we shall be when a few more years have run their course, on which side the great gulph in eternity we shall awake, shall we go away and forget till another sabbath that there is an eternity? Then judge whether any recklessness could be more appalling than yours and mine; whether any creature could be found, who has greater reason than we to bethink himself and tremble.