

ARM Prison Outreach International

"Ministers' Minute" ---- Volume III Number 11

Editor's Note: This "MM" is the 35th email sermon in a series we are sending as an encouragement to preachers and Christian workers around the world. This message develops a text in Luke 16 and teaches us how poor spiritual eyesight can be fatal! It is my prayer that this message will encourage you and those you teach. Use it as a devotional, edit it, share it, or use components of it!

May God bless your labors! -- Rod Farthing, Development Director

The Death of a Rich Man

Luke 16:19-31

Want to help me do a "spiritual autopsy" today? Let's read the text and see who died and if there are clues as the cause of his demise.

Luke 16:19-31

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 hell, 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 fixed, 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 father's house,

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.'" (NIV)

What could have led to his death?

Too rich a diet? Failure to adequately exercise? Old age?

I suggest "spiritual myopia!" Could the cause of his demise be spiritual myopia? Just a fancy name for near-sightedness.

While physical myopia isn't terminal (unless we drive without our

eyeglasses!), spiritual myopia can lead to spiritual death!

1. He couldn't see as far as his own GATE! 19-21

Luke 16:19-21

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.

The rich man somehow could see Lazarus at the gate -- starving and in need. Jesus said that how we see with our spiritual eyes has a LOT to do with the quality and destiny of our lives.

Matt 6:22-23

22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light.
23 But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! (NIV)

Seeing the needs of those around us -- an apparent deficiency on the part of the rich man -- is a basic part of spiritual vision. Are we oblivious to those around us who need love? ...help?... Jesus?

I Jn 2:9-11

9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.
10 Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.
11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him. (NIV)

One of the challenges Jesus issued the disciples was to open their eyes and see the needs of the people. Consider these two passages:

Matt 9:36-38

36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (NIV)

John 4:35 Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. (NIV)

2. He couldn't see as far as his own FAMILY! 27-31

Could it be in the family history? Could he have inherited it? His brothers apparently had it, too.

27 "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house,

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.'" (NIV)

There is someone -- a diabolical someone -- trying to blind us. When we fail to see, we will fail to live, serve, grow, and please God.

2 Cor 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (NIV)

God's blessing and healing is made available to those who will open their eyes and ears. That's why Satan wants us spiritually near-sighted and hard of hearing!

Matt 13:15-16

15 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' 16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. (NIV)

3. He couldn't see as far as his own GRAVE! 22

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.

He lived as if he would never die. How many do that very thing today? God's Word warns us of that fallacy:

James 4:13-14

13 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money."

14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. (NIV)

Part of the wisdom seen in the life of Christ is His making the most of His days as He SAW the end of His days!

Mark 8:31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. (NIV)

John 12:1-8

1 Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

2 Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.

3 Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

4 But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected,
5 "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages."
6 He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.
7 "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial."
8 You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me." (NIV)

Paul also shared this ability to see his death -- and benefited from that spiritual vision by enhancing his living in view of his inevitable death.

Phil 1:20-21

20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.
21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. (NIV)

2 Tim 4:6-8

6 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure.
7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (NIV)

God wants you to see Are your eyes open to the opportunities, His instruction, the future?

CLOSE: Are we too much like the little girl in Vernal, Utah, some years ago? She was separated from her parents overnight -- no coat in 30 degree temperatures! Many combed the hills in that area. The person that finally found her wasn't the first to do so. Here's what I mean. Two other searchers had ACTUALLY TALKED WITH HER LATE IN THE FIRST DAY. They explained the situation and asked if she were the lost girl.

The little girl had answered, "Not me, I am not lost.."

Are you unwilling to admit that you are lost without Jesus? Only those who admit they are lost and call out to Him for help will find life!

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"Remain faithful unto death .." Rev. 2:10B

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