The Rich Man and Lazarus

Deep Prep

Luke 16:19-31

The Big Idea: God promises justice for both the privileged and the miserable.

Learning Goal: Learners will imagine who might play the parts of the rich man and Lazarus in their schools and communities as well as in the world.

Biblical Foundation

The story of the rich man and Lazarus is one of reversal. Mary's song (Luke 1:46-55) and Simeon's saying to Mary (2:34-35) at the Jerusalem temple both announce the importance of social and economic reversal, a common theme in Luke's Gospel. Reversals are part of God's justice. The theme of reversal is most broadly expressed in Jesus' teaching about what it means to be God's people. The ancient Israelites were descended from Abraham, whom God first called to form God's own people. Jesus, himself a descendant of Abraham, comes to fulfill God's promises to Abraham and his descendants. Jesus proclaims that not those who have Abraham in their genealogy but those who hear and do God's word are the true children of Abraham and the inheritors of God's promises. In addition, Jesus proclaims that being socially outcast or unclean will not exclude someone from inheriting God's promises. In Luke, Jesus' message extends beyond the Israelites. Jesus' mission is to the world.

Theological Emphasis

God's justice has two aspects. For people who are wealthy, privileged, and powerful, God's justice comes as judgment. For people who are poor, marginalized, and oppressed, God's justice comes as mercy. While Luke particularly emphasizes this theme, it is strong in scriptural tradition. The deliverance from slavery of the ancient people of God witnesses the dual aspect of God's justice. Under God's guidance and protection, the slaves fled to freedom; their oppressors drowned in the sea (Exodus 13:17-14:29). We humans easily forget who we have been and from where we have come. We easily forget that we are who we are and have what we have by God's grace. We are tempted to mistake God's deliverance for divine privilege and God's provision for our deserving. Succumbing to this temptation, we who have experienced the mercy of God's justice can become oppressors, presuming that God is ours and forgetting that we are God's. Jesus' resurrection, after his torture and execution at the hands of those who understood themselves as privileged by God, is a proclamation against our forgetting.

Historical Context

As a child, Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) immigrated to the United States with his family. Carnegie became a wealthy industrialist, known primarily for making a fortune in steel, and his philanthropy is legend. In 1889, Carnegie wrote an essay titled "Wealth." In the essay, he wrote,
"The man who dies thus rich dies disgraced." Carnegie understood that with wealth comes responsibility. Underlying Carnegie's essay was a contemporary understanding that individual wealth and well-being are signs of God's favor and blessing to those who deserve it. Inversely, those who are poor are also getting what they deserve. Nothing could be further from the teaching of Jesus Christ than the idea that people get what they deserve—in this world or the next. In the United States, a primary measure of people's value is the size of their income and financial wealth. Tempted by such ideas of individuality, some churches teach a strain of this thinking—called "abundance theology" or "success theology." The focus is not on God's abundance and the distributive justice that Jesus taught, but on faithfulness as an avenue to individual prosperity.

Contemporary/Cultural Interpretation

In 1 John 3:17 we read, "How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?" In our world and our country we see huge disparities in income and wealth. In light of that reality, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and other church bodies are committed to giving generously of its wealth, especially for serving the needs of others. The ELCA does this through a variety of programs and agencies, such as World Hunger, Disaster Relief, Bread for the World, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, Lutheran Services in America, and Lutheran World Relief. ELCA-related social ministry organizations throughout the United States annually provide $6.9 billion in services. The giving of human and material resources from individual congregations makes this happen.

Quick Prep

Luke 16:19-31

The Big Idea: God promises justice for both the privileged and the miserable.

Learning Goal: Learners will imagine who might play the parts of the rich man and Lazarus in their schools and communities as well as in the world.

• The story of the rich man and Lazarus is one of reversal, a common theme in Luke's Gospel.
• Social and economic reversals are part of God's justice, which comes as judgment to the privileged and mercy to the marginalized.
• Jesus proclaims that hearing and doing God's word is the basis of inheriting the promises God made to Abraham.
• Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection are a proclamation against the temptation to mistake God's deliverance for divine privilege and God's provision for our deserving.
• We often measure people's worth and value by the size of their income and wealth, but we are who we are and have what we have because of God's grace.
• Our church is committed to using its resources to serve others.
Adolescent Connection

Our earthly life is not fair. Youth are very aware of this fact. This scripture is about justice. Youth live in a culture where they are bombarded with advertisements for expensive things. They have friends or classmates who flaunt their expensive toys and clothes, and they often make fun of those who do not have the means to purchase the expensive things. It does not take much at this vulnerable time in their lives to make youth feel inferior or superior. Helping youth to hear that there is a time in God's kingdom when the people who have and those who do not have will be equalized may help them to realize that the events of today are not the most important things in the total scheme of God's kingdom. It is not easy to look at a long-range picture of fairness when youth feel inferior today. This concept needs to be dealt with in a patient and caring manner.

Baptismal Connection

In the Rite of Affirmation of Baptism, a five-part question addresses each confirmand's intent to continue in the covenant God made with them in Holy Baptism. Here We Stand resources help adolescents—with support from parents, leaders, and the entire congregation—prepare to answer this question as they continue in their lifelong faith journey. Today's lesson focuses on the clause "to live among God's faithful people" (Lutheran Book of Worship, page 201; Evangelical Lutheran Worship, page 236).

Welcoming

Prepare your large group space by playing upbeat music in the background and by welcoming learners as they arrive. Make a special effort to welcome and thank adult small group leaders for their presence and for being willing to help pass on the faith to the next generation.

• Begin by thanking learners for coming! Remind the group what a privilege you feel it is to serve God by leading confirmation, and what a gift from God you consider all of them to be.

• Ask learners to recall last week's Big Idea if they can. Reward the first person to get it right with a handful of candy or some other small treat to share with their small group. (Be aware of any food allergies in the group.) Ask for a volunteer to capture last week's lesson in their own words; affirm all genuine responses; keep going until you're satisfied everyone has been oriented.

• Project this week's Big Idea on the screen or write it in HUGE block letters on your presentation board or overhead slide. Invite learners to recite it with you aloud. Repeat it two or three times.

Skit: The "Late" Show

Ask or assign a small group to perform the skit. In a pinch, grab enough volunteers from the audience to form an impromptu 'readers' theater" troupe.

CHARACTERS: Marigold Flowers (show host), Malcolm Edgerton III (former rich guy, now dead), Lazarus "Laz" Smith (blue-color guy), announcer (offstage)

The Rich Man and Lazarus page 3
ANNOUNCER: Welcome to The Marigold Flowers Show! And now your host, Marigold Flowers! (Applause.)

MARIGOLD: (Enters and sits in a chair.) Thank you. We have a very special show today. With us today is the famous Malcolm Edgerton the Third. He was one of the world's richest men. He had it all, and now he's dead. Let's welcome him.

(Malcolm enters, waves to the audience, and sits down.)

MARIGOLD: Malcolm, it's been a while. How are you?

MALCOLM: Well, not so good. Ever since I died, things have taken a serious downturn. See, now I live in hell.

MARIGOLD: (Gasps.) What happened?

MALCOLM: I used to be extremely wealthy. I had it all, and I kept it all. I was into having the nicest stuff and flaunting it. I wanted to be on top.

MARIGOLD: Nothing wrong with that.

MALCOLM: That's what I thought! But apparently there is something wrong with that. Remember that guy Lazarus Smith? He was always at the in front of my mansion asking for handouts. Well, apparently it would have been a good idea to help that guy instead of yelling at him through the intercom system.

MARIGOLD: But you used to quote that saying, "The Lord helps those who help themselves." Surely that was helpful.

MALCOLM: That expression's not in the Bible. In fact, the Bible is pretty clear that we're supposed to help those in need. The more we have, the more responsibility we have.

MARIGOLD: This is shocking!

MALCOLM: Tell me about it.

MARIGOLD: Well, we've got a surprise for you. We have a guest from heaven—your former nemesis, Lazarus Smith.

(Applause as Lazarus enters.)

MARIGOLD: Laz, how are you?

LAZ: Hi, Marigold. I'm doing great! Heaven is awesome!
MALCOLM: Hey, Laz.

LAZ: Hey, how are you?

MALCOLM: I'm a little crispy! I'm really sorry about that whole "being a jerk and not helping" thing.

LAZ: That's okay. I forgive you.

MALCOLM: Thanks. Hey, do you think you could just get a drop of water to put on my tongue when I'm in hell?

LAZ: No can do. I can't visit you in hell there, and you can't come to heaven.

MALCOLM: If I wasn't so dehydrated, I'd be crying right now.

LAZ: Marigold, I'd like to clarify that heaven is not filled with poor people. There are some rich folks up here too.

MALCOLM: And I've run into some poor folks in hell. It freaked me out.

LAZ: The deal is this: You can't fool God. God knows if you're compassionate and giving or if you're uncaring and selfish.

MALCOLM: Yeah, that sounds about right. I knew I was a wicked guy on earth, and now I've got a lot of time to think about it.

MARIGOLD: Wow, it looks like we're out of time. (To audience.) Thanks for joining us. See you next time.

ANNOUNCER: Some guests of The Marigold Flowers Show stay at the luxurious Brimstone Ranch.

Quiz Show

Have the learners sit on opposite sides of the room in two teams. After the leader reads a question, the first team to have someone stand gets to answer the question. A correct answer wins a point. If the answer is incorrect, the other team gets a chance to answer the same question and win the point. Reward the winning team with a prize.

Multiple Choice

1. In the Gospel of Luke, the theme often emphasized is...
   a. Christmas pageants.
   b. snow.
c. dogs.
d. reversal. (Correct.)

2. In the United States, people's worth often is measured by the size of their...
   a. wardrobe.
   b. SUV.
   c. salary.
   d. all of the above. (Correct.)
3. We earn God's grace...
   a. 100 percent of the time.
   b. 50 percent of the time.
   c. 0 percent of the time. (Correct.)
   d. 33.45321 percent of the time.
4. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shares this amount annually with people in need:
   a. It's a secret.
   b. Hundreds of dollars.
   c. Slightly more than you gave for an offering last Sunday.
   d. Billions of dollars. (Correct.)
5. The name Lazarus means...
   a. "Covered in sores."
   b. "God has helped me." (Correct.)
   c. "Follow me to heaven."
   d. "Did you see me?"

**True or False**

1. We can easily be seduced by all the advantages and comforts we have in life, and we have little will or desire to change the selfish direction of our lives. (True.)
2. God judges the people who are poor and marginalized in our society and shows mercy to the people who are rich and privileged. (False. Time and time again, God shows mercy to outcasts and people who are poor.)
3. "Abundance theology" places individual prosperity over sharing what we have with others. (True.)
4. Being a disciple of Jesus means you must, and you want to, share your gifts. (True.)
5. The rich man's brothers repented of their selfishness and began to teach confirmation. (False. No one goes to warn the brothers, and the passage does not say what finally happens to them.)

**Presenter's Interruptions**

The Rich Man and Lazarus page 6
Keep this menu of short theme-related bits at the ready for those moments when you feel you're losing your audience.

• Clap your hands and ask this question: "How do you measure wealth?" Place a cake pan on the table with an empty glass in it. Ask questions about the riches learners possess. For example: Did you wake up this morning in a society where you can freely speak your opinion? Did you get something to eat today? Did anyone tell you that you could not go to church for confirmation today? Did you talk to anyone today? Did you wake up in a bed this morning? Do you have at least one friend? Each time someone answers "yes" to a question, pour a little water into the glass. Eventually the glass will overflow, representing God's abundance.

• Clap your hands loudly. Divide the class into pairs. Each pair has one minute to demonstrate one of the stark contrasts in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, such as sores/purple linens, hunger/sumptuous food, salvation/condemnation, rich/poor. Students may only use body language to demonstrate the contrasts; no words are allowed. Others have to guess the contrast.

• Set a timer for three minutes and invite learners to write about their interpretations of this Andrew Carnegie quote, "The man who dies thus rich dies disgraced."

Opening Prayer

Calling attention to the themes of reversal and deliverance for this lesson, begin with this prayer:

With thanksgiving, we come into the presence of God, the one who gives all good gifts to humankind.

We worship God the creator, who creates simply because God loves.

Out of love, God caused Jesus to be born like one of us.

Jesus Christ our Lord, emptied himself in love and service to all people, including the poor and marginalized in society.

In the greatest show of love we see Jesus on the cross, because he loves.

Because Jesus emptied himself for us, dying for our sins, we will one day pass from death to eternal life.

In thanks to God. Amen

My Faith Story

This story draws us to the heart of our behavior as people of God. It challenges us to think about how we actually treat others (not just how we imagine we treat others). Studying this parable leads us to define our beliefs as Lutherans about this life and eternal life. Draw three simple figures on the board or chart paper: a head, a stick figure, and a heart. Share with learners how
hearing this story affects your mind, your body, and your soul.

Are you a "Lutheran by default" because you were born into a Lutheran tradition, or did you choose this particular denomination? Tell learners how Lutheran theology of grace, as well as the law and the gospel, shape your life choices, your stewardship, and your relationships to others.

Guest Speaker

Invite a representative from your church body's synod office to speak to the class about stewardship and the ways in which people and churches use their wealth to serve others. Another option is to invite a representative from a fraternal insurance company that supports stewardship and service projects and promotes good money management.

Cartoon Connection: Heaven: This Place Has No Class

*The Funny Shape of Faith*, page 38

If only it were that easy to reverse thousands of years of social hierarchy! Justice for the poor and marginalized could have happened long ago. As it is, we still have the same issues of social hierarchy Jesus wrestled with in his day. The poor still sleep on the streets outside the gates of the rich who wear the latest fashions and eat the fanciest foods. We know that this is not the world that God envisions, and God promises that justice is coming.

Invite your students to think about what "justice" means in this story. Is it fair that the rich man is damned just for being rich? What more could be going on? Encourage your young people to think about times when they've felt like the rich man. How about times when they've felt like Lazarus? How did people treat them? How does this inform their actions toward others? As Christians, what is our responsibility to both the rich man and to Lazarus?

Handbook Connection

Turn to pages 136-137 in *The Lutheran Handbook*, "How to Become a Theologian of the Cross (and Avoid Being a Theologian of Glory)." Place a free-standing cross on the table, along with two people figures (made of clay, building blocks, chenille craft stems, or whatever you can find). Label the figures "Lazarus" and "Rich Man." Read through the five points as a class and take note of the "warning" on the borders of these pages. Position the figures on the table to illustrate each point. For example, read point 4 and move Lazarus closest to the cross. Ask if anyone remembers a countercultural decision that they lived out, making them feel closer to God and further from the world in which he or she lives.

Turn to pages 55-57 in *The Lutheran Handbook*, "Seven Important Things Luther Said (and One Funny One) and What They Meant." Borrow a choir robe and ask for a volunteer to play Luther.
Before class, print points 1, 2, 3, and 7 on separate sheets of paper. Roll up each sheet and tie it like a scroll. In class, "Luther" selects a scroll, unrolls it, and reads the quote. Help the learners search for specific verses in the story of Lazarus and the rich man that connect with Luther's words.

Check out the charts on pages 72-75 of The Lutheran Handbook, "Comparative Denominations: Liturgical Churches and Non-Liturgical Churches." Draw the students' attention to the question "How are we saved?" Read across the pages to compare Lutheran ideas of salvation with other denominations. Lazarus's story helps us to ask this question, "How are we saved?" What kinds of churches do learners' friends attend? Have they ever visited other places of worship? Do the choices and lifestyles of their friends from other churches say anything about their beliefs? (As you approach this discussion, challenge the learners not to perpetuate denominational stereotypes. Continue to refer back to the information listed in The Lutheran Handbook.)

Bible Connection: Just Say No to Greed

• Use rope, yarn, string, or tape to make a large circle on the classroom floor to illustrate God's vision of "Who's In" and "Who's Out." Turn to Luke 1:46-55, the Magnificat. Read each verse and determine who would be in God's circle and who would be out. Learners can play these roles and physically demonstrate who's in and who's not.

Now clear the circle and define it as "The Kingdom of School." Lead a discussion with the students to describe the kind of students who are considered to be the "in crowd" at school. Who's not in? Label class members as those characters and have them stand in or out of the circle.

Finally, label the circle "The Kingdom of North American Society" and try to determine who the privileged are that live in this kingdom and who must reside outside the kingdom.

• Read the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). Have the students think of it as a three-act play. Have the students decide how they would divide the text into three acts. List the verses that are part of each act, and name two or three themes or points that would be included in each act. The outline of the three acts may look like this:

Act 1 (Luke 16:19-21)

Rich are rich and poor are poor

No action or interaction between rich and poor

A picture of life

Act 2 (Luke 16:22-23)

Rich are now poor and poor are now blessed
A totally different picture

Act 3 (Luke 16: 24-31)

Rich still poor and poor still blessed

Lots of dialogue and a climax to the story

Emphasize the many reversals and radical nature of this story, not only for our society but also for its original hearers. Most people to whom Jesus told this story believed that blessings, such as those the rich man enjoyed, were signs of God's favor, and that hardships, such as the ones Lazarus endured, were signs of God's displeasure. Of course, that is not true, as this story illustrates.

Divide the class into three groups. Assign one act of the story to each group and have the groups prepare to act it out for the whole group.

More Bible Connections

• In 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 Paul describes the church as one body with many different members. Read and discuss the verses. God likes variety, making us all different and giving us all particular gifts. Name some of the gifts mentioned in the verses and throughout chapters 12—14 (preaching, serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing, giving aid, acting mercifully, helping, healing, organizing meetings). Help the students to realize that they have these gifts too. Our gifts are not to serve ourselves, though. We are to serve two groups of people: those to whom we belong with in our community of faith, and to anyone else who has need of our gifts. As one of God's own, we have God's promise to take us as we are, great or ordinary, and make us God's own to serve in God's kingdom.

Object Lesson: The Gap

Abraham told the rich man that the chasm between him and Lazarus in the afterlife was too wide to cross. Mark two lines on the floor with masking tape. The lines should be at least 6' (1.8 meters) apart. Learners can try to jump the chasm between the lines and find out the distance for themselves. Discuss this question: Why do we insist on believing that we will never be subject to God's law and limits? Ask learners to share their strategies for leaping to the other side. Have learners ever been punished for their irresponsible actions? Did they tell their friends about their punishment?
Science Connection: Predictions

In advance of this lesson, assemble the following items and read through this experiment.

Lunch-sized paper bag for each student
Three colors of poker chips or buttons, such as red, blue, and green
Paper and pencils
Small bag of M&M candies or jellybeans for each student, and one for demo (optional)
Shallow bowl

Life doesn't always seem fair. We can neither know nor predict what is going to happen before it does. Use this experiment to explore something about predictability.

Give each student a bag with two red chips, four green chips, and six blue chips inside. Have them look into their bags and estimate how many of each color they have. Then close the bags, shake them, and reach in and pick one chip out of the bag. Make a tally of the color, then repeat this 10 more times to see how many times you choose the same color.

What happens? Which is the most likely color to be picked the most times?
This is your best chance for predicting what color you will pick.

Try the experiment again to find your second best chance. What happens?

Now give each student a package of M&M candies. Open a bag yourself, and put one candy of each different color into the shallow bowl. Point out the color assortment you have in your bag, then have students write down an estimate of the number of candies of each color they predict will be in their own bags. Once they have recorded their ideas, let them open the bags, sort, and count. Tally the results and find the similarities, as well as the student whose predictions were closest. Enjoy the candy when done, and then consider how the story of Lazarus and the rich man defies or upholds the concept of predictability.

Video/DVD: Making a Difference

Option 1: The Greatest Game Ever Played


Start cue: (Chapter 3, 00:17:55) At the end of the day, Francis returns his golf bag to the storage room. A bearded man asks, "What did you shoot?"
End cue: (Chapter 3, 00:20:16) Francis's friend stands and agrees to sponsor Francis. "And that would be me." ?"

Francis is a gifted young golfer. But he is a caddie and an immigrant's son. As such, he would never qualify for membership in the elite club where he works. But a club member takes an
interest in Francis's talent and allows him to play on the club's course. Afterwards, he encourages
Francis to apply for an upcoming amateur competition. Francis's initial treatment mirrors
Lazarus's experiences with the rich man.

• Where in your world have you encountered a "members only" attitude? When have you
struggled to accept a newcomer, or someone who doesn't seem to "qualify" for inclusion?
• Who are the "Lazaruses" in your schools and communities? Who are the "rich men"? How
might you reach out to them with Christ's love this week?

Please preview this content to determine its appropriateness for your setting.

Option 2: Ever After: A Cinderella Story


Start cue: (Chapter 27, 1:47) Prince Henry produces the shoe from behind his back. "Danielle,
perhaps you would be so kind as to help me find the owner of this rather remarkable shoe."
End cue: The washerwoman says, "And move those over there."

Danielle is an ill-treated servant in her cruel stepmother's household. She masquerades as a
noblewoman to save a friend's life, and subsequently wins the heart of the prince. Meanwhile, her
stepmother connives to match her equally self-serving daughter, Marguerite, with the prince. But
Henry's heart is set on winning Danielle.

• If grace is free (which it is) and salvation is fully accomplished through Jesus (which it is), what
difference do our actions and attitudes make in our lives?
• What does a life patterned after Jesus’ example look like?

Please preview this content to determine its appropriateness for your setting.

Option 3: A Christmas Carol

Provide the movie A Christmas Carol (1999, unrated).

Start cue: (Chapter 22, 1:22) Ebenezer leans out his window. "Hello! What's today?"
End cue: Ebenezer dances with his nephew's wife.

On Christmas Eve, hard-hearted Ebenezer Scrooge refuses opportunities to help the poor, show
kindness to his clerk Bob Cratchit, and share Christmas dinner with his nephew. But after
otherworldly spirits show him a glimpse of his lonely, tragic future, he becomes both the giver
and recipient of gracious gifts.

• Is it possible for a wealthy person to be poor and needy?
• How do kindness and generosity make us rich?

Please preview this content to determine its appropriateness for your setting.

The Rich Man and Lazarus page 12
Music: Use It or Lose It

Option 1: "The Word"

Provide the song "Better Days" by The Goo Goo Dolls (from *Let Love In*, Warner Bros./WEA, 2006).

There is stark contrast between Lazarus and the Rich Man in this story. On earth while they are both alive, the Rich Man does nothing to help Lazarus in his sickness, hunger, or poverty. In death, Lazarus is the man who is rewarded and the Rich Man is punished for the choices he made in life. This song by the Goo Goo Dolls speaks of the choices we can make in our life—choices to forgive and be forgiven, to set our priorities in order, to love all people.

- Do you know people who are like Lazarus? The Rich Man? In what ways?
- Do you find yourself ever behaving like Lazarus or the Rich Man? How?
- What kinds of choices can you make now to improve how you care for other people in your life?

*Please preview this content to determine its appropriateness for your setting.*

Option 2: "Touching Heaven, Changing Earth"


We all make choices about how to live our lives. Will we be generous? Helpful? Loving and forgiving? Or will we be selfish? Greedy? Mean and spiteful? This week's story shows us the contrast between the Rich Man and Lazarus, and how the choices they made greatly affected what happened to them after death. In Reuben Morgan's song, the lyrics speak of living a life worthy of heaven as we learn how to praise God, and treat others and ourselves here on earth.

- What kind of choices are you making now in your life that you think are great choices? What kinds of choices are you making that are not great choices?
- Can you think of someone you know who you respect for making positive and faithful choices in their life and lifestyle?

*Please preview this content to determine its appropriateness for your setting.*

Option 3: "You Can't Take It with You"

Provide the song "You Can't Take It with You" by Kelly Willis (from *Easy*, Rykodisc, 2002).
The rich man thought he was amassing something lasting in his riches. He soon finds out, however, that he takes only his soul with him to the afterlife. Ask the learners to ponder the following:

- What are earthly possessions good for?
- What is money good for?
- How can we invest our earthly possessions in eternal things?
- How can God use you to comfort the poor in this life?

Please preview this content to determine its appropriateness for your setting.

Learning in Motion

How hard is it to turn your life around? Bring some hand mirrors to class and organize a relay race in which learners have to walk or run backward, using a mirror. Find a large space where learners have room to move safely. Divide the class into two teams. Each team lines up single file. The first person on each team walks or runs backward to the other end of the room, using the mirrors to navigate. If this seems too easy, put some nondangerous items in the path, such as chairs or balls. Learners waiting for their turn should also be standing with their backs turned to the course.

Closing Questions

Consider starting the Closing Time with a "Stump the Presenter!" moment in which learners may ask you questions that have come up during their small group discussions, but for which they want further explanation. This gives the small group leaders an "honorable out" when they get into sticky theological territory, and it's a great way to start out your final minutes together.

If there are no "Stump the Presenter!" questions, tickle learners with one or more of the following questions to connect Small Group Time with the larger conversation:

- A priest in South Africa recently spoke of his work with women and children with AIDS. The priest said that when he looked into each face, God seemed to be saying to him, "This life is precious. What are you going to do to show that?" What are we going to do to recognize the preciousness of the invisible people on this earth?
- Have any of us or our friends faced a radical change in our lives, a reversal of fortune, because of injury, illness, divorce, or a move to a new city? Where did we find God?
- What do we need to do for God right now instead of waiting for another time, like the rich man did?

Closing Ritual

Begin the ritual in a circle. Learners and leaders stand with their backs to the center of the circle.
Place a cross, Bible, and candle in the center of the circle. While learners are facing outward, read a fact about our world, such as: • Many people live on less than $1 a day.

• Following the earthquake in the Middle East, children without shelter are dying in the cold.

• Post-Thanksgiving sales in the United States have reached their highest levels ever.

• Thousands of hurricane survivors in Indonesia still do not have homes.

• The food crisis in one African country extends for another year as the drought conditions continue.

After each fact, learners turn to face the inside of the circle and say, "We turn to you, O Lord." Finish by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

Closing Blessing

Before anyone leaves to go home, make sure each learner receives the following blessing from the small group leader, or from you! (Or, if you like, consider writing your own blessing, based on your teaching time.) Have leaders trace the cross on each learner's forehead as they say the blessing.

May the God who blessed the poor and promised them the kingdom of heaven lead us to name the poverty of our spirit and accept God's grace. In the name of the Father +, and of the Son +, and of the Holy Spirit +. Amen
Small Group Leader Sheet: The Rich Man and Lazarus

Instructions

Make sure each learner has a Learner Sheet for use during your discussion. At the end of the lesson they can take the Learner Take-Home Sheet to use with their household at dinner or bedtime.

Be sure to start on a positive note. Welcome each learner by name. Let them know you're glad they're here! If anyone is absent, mention you'll be praying for that person together. Small Group Time is for give-and-take discussion. Your main job is to draw learners out and get them talking about the theme. Ask open-ended questions that will provoke responses. Once the conversation begins, intervene only to bring it back on track or to stimulate more talk.

Quick Prep

Luke 16:19-31

The Big Idea: God promises justice for both the privileged and the miserable.

Learning Goal: Learners will imagine who might play the parts of the rich man and Lazarus in their schools and communities as well as in the world.

• The context in which these stories are told is important and demands that we look at the hard question these parables pose for the (supposed) "nonlost." They just might be the real intended recipients of the message in these stories.

• This parable of the prodigal son has a beautiful picture of grace—the father running out to meet the son and putting his arms around him and kissing him before the lost son even has the chance to ask for forgiveness.

• We don't often enough put ourselves in the place of the eldest son. He is our prideful self, the side of us that not only thinks we can make it into the "father's arms" on our own but privately thinks we have.

• These stories are a call for celebrating God's radical grace. God loves each of us because that's who God is.

Prayer Time

Go around the group and have each learner share the best and worst thing from his or her week. Remind learners to pay special attention to (for example) the person on their right, as they will be praying for that person in a moment (alternate prayer partners from week to week). When the group has finished, prayer partners can pray for each other.

Key Words
REVERSAL means a complete change, a total turnaround, for better or worse.

REPENTANCE means to turn from your sin and dedicate yourself to changing your life for the better.

JUSTICE is the principle of right action, sometimes called righteousness or truth.

Discussion Time

*Use the following questions to kick off a conversation about the theme:*

- What does justice look like around the world? Check newspapers and Web sites to identify needs for justice. Where can you help fight injustices in your community or in the world? How is your church involved in bringing justice to people?

- The rich man suffered from a lack of limits. He idolized an opulent lifestyle and didn't know when to stop. What limits help us keep our sights on a life of faith? *(Answers may include concern for all people, family expectations, a desire to serve God and others, prayer, personal goals, mentors, God's word.)* What keeps us from becoming the rich man who couldn't stop?

- Turn to pages 93-95 in The Lutheran Handbook to read "How to Work for Peace and Justice on Behalf of People Who Are Poor and Oppressed." Review the seven ideas for getting involved. Which ones can you make a commitment to do as a class? Select one or more of the options and get started!

**Big Fun Idea**

Plan a movie night at the church or at someone's home. Get a couple of DVDs, and plenty of popcorn and soft drinks. Invite someone who is not a close friend so you can get to know the person better and introduce him or her to your class group.

**Big Serving Idea**

The gate was an essential element in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Entryways appear throughout the Bible, marking passages into new worlds. The doors of the church also mark the places where we welcome, or don't welcome, others. Volunteer to serve as a greeter on Sunday morning. Make it your job to keep the area around the doors clean and welcome everyone with a smile and a handshake!
Funny Shape of Faith Small Group Devotions: The Rich Man and Lazarus

Have a volunteer read the devotion that corresponds with this cartoon: "Heaven: This Place Has No Class," *The Funny Shape of Faith: Devotions for the Rest of Us* (Augsburg Fortress, 2007), p. 39. Then use the following questions to spark group discussion.

How do you view money? Is it good, bad, or something in between?

How does money solve problems in this world? How does it cause problems?

Jesus often told money stories to illustrate a point. Why do you think he used money as opposed to, say, fruit or stalks of wheat?
Learner Sheet: The Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31

The Big Idea: God promises justice for both the privileged and the miserable.

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Prayer Time

Remember your partner's prayer needs—record them here.

Discussion Time

• What does justice look like around the world? Check newspapers and Web sites to identify needs for justice. Where can you help fight injustices in your community or in the world? How is your church involved in bringing justice to people?

• The rich man suffered from a lack of limits. He idolized an opulent lifestyle and didn't know when to stop. What limits help us keep our sights on a life of faith? What keeps us from becoming the rich man who couldn't stop?

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Learner Take-Home Sheet: The Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31

*Take this sheet home and keep it someplace near the dinner table, like on the fridge. At least three times next week at dinner, use Prayer Time and one other family activity to make your confirmation learning come alive!*

**Prayer Time**

As a family, pray the Serenity Prayer (written by Reinhold Niebuhr).

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference.*

**Key Words**

Keep a family white board someplace near the dinner table, and write these words on it. Try writing a family definition for each one during the week.

REVERSAL

REPENTANCE

JUSTICE

**Talk Time**

* We are encouraged as families to talk about drugs. Do we ever talk about money as a drug? How does money control our behavior as a family? Are we spending our money in the way God asks of us? Try not spending any money for a day or more. Is it hard to do?

* Talk about how people at school, work, or in the neighborhood try to one-up everyone else. Why do people think they have to have more stuff or better stuff than anyone else?

* The rich man didn't respond to Lazarus. Did he see him? Did he hear him? Keep a piece of paper with you when you are away from home and watch for the needs of people that you might otherwise not notice. Make a list of what you see and hear and bring it to family prayer time.

**Web Time**

Use an Internet search engine to search for the key words listed on this page. Write down the most interesting sites you find. Then do a search for "repentance." What do you find? Explore
Ritual Time

Try instituting this practice in your family: The next time you decide to buy something new other than essentials, make a commitment to give something away too. This natural balance forces the buyer to decide whether the new item will be worth giving up something else. Consumption and sharing become more closely tied through this simple practice.
A young woman walks down a city street, gossiping about other people with a friend over the phone. After she hangs up, she enters a bookstore and peruses some titles. She finds a large, old book in a dusty corner and is surprised to see that it contains all of her transgressions.

- What does the shop owner mean when he says, "There's only one person who can afford the price of that book"? (*Only Jesus could bear the burden of the justice we sinners deserved. Because Jesus paid the price for us, God's grace mercifully forgives our sins and withholds the punishment we deserve.*)

- What is justice?

- How can our everyday attitudes and behaviors contribute to promoting justice for others?
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Video 2: Driving Lessons

*Media file: TheRichManandLazarus.mpg*

Jesus' parable isn't necessarily an indictment against the rich, but rather a lesson about loving our neighbors with whatever resources we have. The following video, a 1930s driver's safety film, portrays a reckless driver who only sees the faults of the drivers around him. His self-centered behavior nearly causes several accidents, until he is hauled off to court and taught a valuable lesson. Ask students to consider what this video has to say about how our attitude toward others affects our behavior toward them.

What lesson does the reckless driver learn? *("We are the other fellow." He is responsible for his neighbor.)* Describe a time when walking a mile (kilometer) in someone else's shoes changed your mind toward him or her. If Jesus told this parable today, which character would you be? How can we reach out to both the "rich men" and the "Lazaruses" of the world?
Music Clip: Everybody Matters

*Media file: TheRichManandLazarus.mp3*

Song: "Everybody Matters"
CD: *Something Different* (www.speedwood.net)
Artist: Lost And Found
© 2002 Lost And Found and Limb Records

Everybody in the whole world matters
Everybody has a place
Everybody in the whole world matters
Everybody has a place

As human beings, we are all prone to judging people based on hairstyle, fashion, tattoos, cars, jobs, and more. However, God does not see us in those terms. God sees us through loving eyes; God sees our heart, our potential, and the small things that might be extremely powerful in the lives of others. In short, everybody matters! Play the song, then ask the following questions.

- What character traits do you think are important to God?
- Do you sometimes catch yourself judging people? What is going through your mind at these times?
- What can we do to see others the way God sees them?

Note: You can purchase the CD featuring this song from the Augsburg Fortress online store (www.augsburgfortress.org).
This presentation includes a video file and an audio file. All three (the presentation, the video, and the audio) will download at once as a ZIP archive. Unzipping the archive will produce a single folder containing all three files. For the presentation to work properly, the files must all be in the same folder; therefore, we recommend you not remove them from the folder produced when you unzip the archive, but rather move the entire folder as a single unit.

*Media file: TheRichManandLazarus.zip*
Cartoon

Media file: TheRichManandLazarus.tif

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