

Sermon Summary: The Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man

1. This is the only parable of its kind that Jesus tells: it's set in the afterlife, and in it he mentions a character by name—Lazarus. That may mean it has special significance.
2. To get at the parable's deeper meaning, we focus on four names/terms that appear in it: **purple, gate, Lazarus, and Hades.**
3. The color purple is symbolic. It signifies royalty and goes with wealth. Here it points to a society divided (like ours) into haves (the rich man) and have-nots (Lazarus).
4. The gate keeps the have-nots at a distance, insulating the rich man whose sin is not his wealth but his _____ to the poor (fill in the blank).
5. Lazarus in this story is not the same man whom Jesus loved (John 11:3), the brother of Mary and Martha, but the servant of Abraham (Genesis 15). His name means "God has helped"—certainly appropriate as a name here since nobody else has!
6. Hades according to Jesus, unlike the way it's described in early Greek myths, is hell. Jesus brings it up not necessarily to forecast what death will be like, but to change the way his listeners treat the poor in the here and now. Recognize what you're doing, Jesus might say, before it's too late!
7. Do you avert your eyes when you see incarnations of Lazarus today? I know I do sometimes. Will you be like the rich man when you see Lazarus this week, or will you—as God's hands in the world—do God's work and be God's help to him?