

Excerpts from: **'Feign-ly Phatt Pharisee**  
[Luke 16:19-31](#)

There once was a rich man, expensively dressed in the latest fashions, wasting his days in conspicuous consumption. A poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, had been dumped on his doorstep. All he lived for was to get a meal from scraps off the rich man's table. His best friends were the dogs who came and licked his sores.

Then he died, this poor man, and was taken up by the angels to the lap of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell and in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham in the distance and Lazarus in his lap. He called out, "Father Abraham, mercy! Have mercy! Send Lazarus to dip his finger in water to cool my tongue. I'm in agony in this fire.

But Abraham said, "Child, remember that in your lifetime you got the good things and Lazarus the bad things. It's not like that here. Here he's consoled and you're tormented. Besides, in all these matters there is a huge chasm set between us so that no one can go from us to you even if he wanted to, nor can anyone cross over from you to us."

"The rich man said, "Then let me ask you, Father: Send him to the house of my father where I have five brothers, so he can tell them the score and warn them so they won't end up here in this place of torment. "Abraham answered, "They have Moses and the Prophets to tell them the score. Let them listen to them.

"I know, Father Abraham", he said, "but they're not listening. If someone came back to them from the dead, they would change their ways." Abraham replied, "If they won't listen to Moses and the Prophets, they're not going to be convinced by someone who rises from the dead."

To set the context of this chapter, Jesus has been speaking to the crowds and the Pharisees about money. And in this story of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus is telling it for the ears of the Pharisees, and they don't like it. They are not at all pleased with what they have seen and heard from Jesus. In a previous setting they grumbled against Jesus for receiving sinners and even eating with them.

While the Pharisees could identify with the rejoicing of one who found something material (like a coin), they could not rejoice in the return of a repentant sinner, even though all of heaven did so. This is because **they hated grace**. They did **not** believe they needed grace, and they did not appreciate it being manifested to anyone else, especially the undeserving (which are always the recipients of grace).

What especially angered the Pharisees, however, was something else. The Pharisees, whom Luke now tells us were "lovers of money", were very shrewd in their use of money, in such an evil way as to make the unjust steward in [Luke 16:1-12](#) look like a saint. The Pharisees were "ripping off" little old ladies, as Jesus put it in Matthew's gospel, they were robbing widows' houses. That for which the Pharisees prided themselves, Jesus viewed as wicked. In His parable of the unjust steward, Jesus identified the shrewd as unbelievers, contrasting them with saints. Now, the Pharisees, who were proud of their skill in making money were mad. That did it! Grumbling turned to scoffing.

Their reaction has turned from discontent to disruption. They kept on scoffing, so as to

become "hecklers" of Jesus. His words on the subject of money had proven to be too much. Luke tells his readers here that the Pharisees were "lovers of money," an expression which is found only elsewhere in the New Testament in 2 Timothy 3:2. Luke tells us this fact because it helps us to understand why the Pharisees would be so distressed by Jesus' teaching on money in the previous parable and its interpretation. They loved money and they were shrewd in the ways they found to gain it, to keep it, and to use it to indulge themselves.

But what, specifically, were the Pharisees scoffing about? The text does not tell us exactly, and perhaps we would do best to leave it at that. Given the Lord's words in response to their scoffing, we might conjecture what they would be scoffing about. They judged on appearances. Jesus was talking a great deal about money, and how to use it. They could well have said to themselves and others, "Who is this expert on money, anyway? Who does He think He is? How much money does He possess? He is so poor that He has to have women of means accompany Him, to provide for His needs!" They may very well have mocked Jesus' teaching, based upon His poverty.

But you see, Jesus' poverty was that which proved His qualification to teach on money. Jesus did not have money because He did not take money. He had no vested interest. He had no desire to get rich and to live luxuriously. Thus, Jesus could speak as one who was disinterested, rather than as one who was preoccupied with money and material things.

In response to these scoffers, Jesus did not bother pointing out that the Pharisees were really "lovers of money." The reason is, I believe, that Jesus was interested in the source of their problem, not just in symptoms. Loving money was a serious problem, but it was not the root of their problem. In verse\_ 15 Jesus exposed the root problem-**The Pharisees sought approval from the wrong person, on the wrong basis:**

When the Pharisees, a money-obsessed bunch, heard him say these things, they rolled their eyes, dismissing him as hopelessly out of touch. So Jesus spoke to them: "You are masters at making yourselves look good in front of others, but God knows what's behind the appearance. You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight. You are masters at making yourselves look good in front of others, but God knows what's behind the appearance." *Luke 16:14,15*

The underlying problem of the Pharisees was that they were **seeking their approval from the wrong source**, and they were seeking to be judged according to the **wrong standard**. They were striving to be justified by men, and their standard had to be that which men could see and evaluate-outward appearances.

This simple observation explains the actions of the Pharisees and also their reactions to Jesus. Because the Pharisees wanted the approval of men they acted in a way that would attract attention to themselves, in a way that would make them look righteous, as men might judge it. The Pharisees were into long prayers, they visibly fasted, and made contributions, and took the places of prominence at banquets and the like. Their clothing, too, was ostentatious.

The Pharisees were repulsed by the fact that Jesus associated with sinners, and even ate with them. They were proud of the fact that they kept their distance. No defilement for them! They meticulously washed themselves ceremonially, and they observed Sabbath

regulations. In all of this, Jesus said, they were hypocrites, because their hearts were wicked, because they were not really righteous at all.

It is God, however who justifies, and not men. God does not judge on the basis of outward appearance, but He knows and bases His judgment on what is in man's heart.

God's standards differ greatly from man's, indeed..... they are the exact opposite. Those things which men highly esteem, Jesus said, are an abomination to God.

Now we can see why the Pharisees valued money so highly. Money, to the Pharisee, was one of the external proofs of piety. After all, had God not in Deuteronomy promised to prosper His people Israel if they kept His laws (Deuteronomy 28:1-14), and to bring them great poverty and adversity if they disobeyed?

Money was the proof of piety that would cause an externalist to love. The Pharisees' love of money was an indication of their attachment to external standards and appearances, so that they **could obtain the praise of men**. In the process of seeking men's praise, they also obtained God's condemnation.

Here, Jesus indicts His opponents as playing before the wrong audience, according to the wrong standards or rules. In verses 16-18, Jesus accuses those who prided themselves as the "custodians of the Law" as being its corrupters.

**Here is the charge Jesus made against the Pharisees:** The Pharisees had played to the standards of men, and had set aside the Law and the Prophets. They had come to live in accordance with what men approved. Jesus challenged them, showing that they had turned their backs on what God approved and disapproved, and then he shares the story of the rich man and Lazarus with them. While he was alive Dives - "Dee-veys", Latin for "rich man" - lived a lifestyle of the rich and famous. Luke tells us he wasted his days in "conspicuous consumption" (Luke 16:19). While he was feasting, Lazarus was dying at his gate, covered by a rag, passing away with the afflictions of desperate hunger. Predictably, they both died.

That's when the shock begins; or at least it ought to begin for those who are alive and have ears to hear. After all, Lazarus, who had **no lifestyle choices**, being desperately hungry and dependent upon the kindness of chance, is raised to enjoy the consolations of heaven. While Dives, the rich man who presumably had **every choice available to him** and the power to shape his lifestyle any way he wanted, is sent to suffer the torments of hell. Only then, suffering the painful consequences of hell itself does Dives begin to assess his "lifestyle."....when it was too late.

So.....What are **YOU** waiting for?