

GOSPEL PEARLS

The damned rich man's error

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Jesus said to the Pharisees: 'There was a rich man who used to dress in purple and fine linen and feast magnificently every day. And at his gate there lay a poor man called Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to fill himself with the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even came and licked his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. 'In his torment in Hades he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off with Lazarus in his bosom. So he cried out, "Father Abraham, pity me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames." "My son," Abraham replied "remember that during your life good things came your way, just as bad things came the way of Lazarus. Now he is being comforted here while you are in agony. But that is not all: between us and you a great gulf has been fixed, to stop anyone, if he wanted to, crossing from our side to yours, and to stop any crossing from your side to ours." The rich man replied, "Father, I beg you then to send Lazarus to my father's house, since I have five brothers, to give them warning so that they do not come to this place of torment too." "They have Moses and the prophets," said Abraham "let them listen to them." "Ah no, father Abraham," said the rich man "but if someone comes to them from the dead, they will repent." Then Abraham said to him, "If they will not listen either to Moses or to the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead."' (Luke 16, 19-31)

When the damned soul of the rich man turns to Abraham asking for mercy and to send Lazarus to comfort him, it's evident that by pronouncing Lazarus' name he not only knew the poor man during his earthly life but must have noticed the miserable state he was in too. The rich man's sin was his indifference to the miseries and the sufferings

these inflicted on Lazarus by refusing to alleviate them with his mercy and preferring the ephemeral pleasures of life. In fact, no one ends up in hell unaware. Everyone is given the opportunity to waken up from the torpor of their sins. Ask yourself if you too could have made the same mistake as the rich man who did not help those he could have helped.