

Anne and Fran

Ron Roberts

Anne was born in an upper middle class family. Her dad had a steady job and her mom stayed home with her. She went to college, had a good career, and married later in life. Anne was healthy all her life and passed away quietly in her bed when she was seventy nine.

Fran grew up in a broken home. She never met her father and her mother worked long hours to keep them fed. When she barely graduated high school she tried to get a job, but a number of health issues prevented her from working steadily. She never married and died after a horrific battle with cancer when she was only forty seven.

Which of these fictional ladies would you rather be?

Most people, without a moment's hesitation, would say Anne. She had a good life; a life like we would wish for ourselves and others. She did not have the harm and heartbreaks of Fran.

Some would pause to answer the question. The answer seems too obvious. There must be something hidden, something we are not told, something more we should know. This is exactly right. Before answering the question you should ask, "Was either of them a Christian?"

Both stories ended the same. They died. But what happened after that? If one or both were faithful Christians, then their spirits went to Paradise. If Fran was a saint and Anne was not, then the conditions of their lives would not make you want to choose Anne. The torments she would face for eternity, would not make her seventy nine years more desirable.

Jesus tells a story similar to Anne and Fran in Luke 16. The characters are the rich man and Lazarus. Our Lord begins by telling us what their lives were like on earth.

Luke 16:19 says, "*There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.*" That life sounds even better than Anne's. Many would say, "I want to be him!"

The next description is of Lazarus. Luke 16:20-21. "*And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.*" "Well, we certainly would not desire that life for ourselves or even for our worst enemy!"

Like Anne and Fran, the story ends the same. The rich man and Lazarus died. Luke 16:22 records, "*And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;*" From the physical perspective, the rich man was still ahead. He died and was buried. He likely had a wonderful funeral with many mourning friends. Fine words would have been spoken over his casket if the service was conducted like ours.

At this verse we also notice a transition in perspective. The human eye could not see it, but Lazarus' spirit was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom (Paradise). In the following verses we learn the rich man's spirit showed up in Torments (a second dwelling place in Hades, Hell in KJV). Now you would have no desire to be the rich man. Now Lazarus' life did not seem all that bad.

Luke 16:23-24 reveals that the rich man was tormented in flames and was able to see and communicate with Abraham. He wanted Lazarus (who was at Abraham's side) to be sent to him with water to cool his tongue. This was not possible. A great gulf was fixed between Paradise and Torments so that no one could cross over (26). There was also the issue of justice. Luke 16:25 says, *"But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."*

We do not know why the rich man was so selfish in life. Lazarus was in need and at his gate. He was ignored and neglected. I suspect the rich man was very satisfied with his life and did not look beyond it. This could be the same problem that would keep Anne from seeking the Lord.

Fran may have sought Jesus in her troublesome life. Obviously Lazarus did. He was not saved merely because he was poor. He must have sought God out in his conflict.

Now the life of trouble seems more beneficial than the life of comfort. If I can find Jesus through heartaches, then I should be yearning for heartaches. If ease on earth will cause me to be satisfied with life here and now, then I had better find a path away from my ease.

The story ends with the rich man wanting Lazarus to return to the living and warn his five brothers, so they could avoid the place of torment. Abraham said such a journey would be useless because the only means of escape was already in their world. Through Moses and the prophets they could learn the truth and go to Paradise (29-31). The Gospel teaches us.

We get so concerned about the Coronavirus, the economy, and the primary candidates; but only one thing matters. Be prepared for your end. Obey the Gospel.