

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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Hell is Truth Known Too Late – The Rich Man and Lazarus [Part 5]

September 11, 2022

Sermon Text: Luke 16:19-31

Scripture Reading: John 11:38-53

Luke 16:22-31 The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, (23) and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. (24) And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.'

(25) But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime

received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. (26) And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.'

(27) And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— (28) for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.'

(29) But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' (30) And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' (31) He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone

should rise from the dead.””

Hell is real, and hell is eternal. Heaven is real, and heaven is eternal. Every human being who has ever lived, who now lives, and who will live in this present world was, is, or will be traveling to one or the other. On the Broadway, or on the Narrow Way. And the Bible is very plain – *few are they who find the narrow way.*

As we continue this morning to hear the Lord Jesus’ own words in this account of the Rich Man and Lazarus, be certain to give careful and honest heed to apply what Christ says to ourselves. We will give energetic attention to be certain that we are on the correct airline flight so that we arrive at the proper destination. If somehow a person boards the wrong flight and subsequently realizes it, that fact will dominate their thoughts and efforts until they change flights. The majority of human beings right now at this moment are on the wrong flight. They are on the Way that leads to destruction, and yet they pay no mind to the peril at all.

Here then we have this Rich Man (who turns out to be the poor man in reality) in the eternal torment of Hades. He is the primary focus of this parable and that tells us that Jesus intends for us to give focused attention to that wicked man’s end, warning anyone who is living for themselves, giving no mind to Christ at all, that judgment and hell await them if they do not turn and repent. Hell is real, as the Rich Man found out, and Hell is eternal, as he knows right now.

The certainty and endlessness of the future punishment of the wicked are truths which we must hold fast and never let go. From the day when Satan said to Eve, “You surely will not die!” there never have been lacking men who have denied them. Let us not be deceived.

There is a hell for the impenitent as well as a heaven for believers. There is a wrath to come for all who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus (2 Thessalonians 1:8). From that wrath let us flee to the great hiding place, Jesus Christ the

Lord. If men find themselves in torment at last, it will not be because there was no way to escape.

Ryle, J. C.. Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of Luke: A Commentary (Updated Edition) (p. 342). Aneko Press. Kindle Edition.

Matthew Henry made this brief but pointed and powerful note in regard to Abraham denying the request of the Rich Man –

“There is no request granted in hell. All the Rich Man’s prayers were made in vain.”

Too late. Too late. All opportunity for praying is over in hell.

This last verse of the parable is our primary focus this morning. (31) He said to him, *‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’*”

William Hendriksen made this observation about this latter portion of Jesus’ parable:

This passage does not always receive the attention it deserves. *“But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’*” The obvious reason is that if the doomed man himself had only read and taken to heart Moses and the Prophets, and if his brothers would only do the same, they would not be lost.”

“Moses and the Prophets” of course means the Old Testament Scriptures. There was and is adequate and plain evidence in the OT for people to heed if they will. Not only is there repeated warning of judgment to come, there is also repeated announcement of Christ and salvation in Him, not to mention all the scriptures that command us to show kindness to the needy and oppressed:

Exo 22:22-24 You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. (23) If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, (24) and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives

shall become widows and your children fatherless.

Lev 19:10 And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.

Dan 4:27 Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.”

All these and many others this Rich Man totally ignored. He did so knowingly and willfully. Here is Matthew Henry again:

By this it appears that there is sufficient evidence in the Old Testament, in Moses and the prophets, to convince those that will hear them impartially that there is another life after this, and a state of rewards and punishments for good and bad men; for that was

the thing which the rich man would have his brothers assured of.”

Think carefully on the implications of the Rich Man’s request. *There is no unbelief in hell.* As we have been stating in this series of messages – *hell is truth known too late.* These old writers and preachers have put it so well, I must keep pointing you to their words:

“The change that will come over the minds of unconverted men after death is one of the most fearful points in their future condition. There will see, and know, and understand a hundred things to which they were obstinately blind while they were alive. They will discover that, like Esau, they have bartered away eternal happiness for a mere mess of pottage. There is no unbelief, or skepticism, or infidelity after death.” (Ryle)

(29) But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ (30) And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the

dead, they will repent.’ (31) He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

The Rich Man’s reasoning is false of course – *if someone goes to them from the dead they will repent*. It is probable that it is no coincidence that Jesus used “Lazarus” as the name of the poor beggar – perhaps that really was his name. But we know that there was another Lazarus:

Joh 11:42-44 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.” (43) When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” (44) The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

A Lazarus had in fact already been raised from the dead. Right in front of the Jews. Everyone knew. Did

they respond in repentance as this Rich Man insists his brothers would? No. And of course we know of that second great resurrection – that of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is risen, yet do men believe Him? The vast majority do not because they will not.

Miracles are not what is needed. More evidence is not what is needed. And yet this is the very thing that so many people continue to demand. The Bible is not enough for them. God’s plain revelation of His existence in the creation is not enough for them. Of course most of such people have never read the Bible at all. They dismiss it out of hand.

Mat 12:38-39 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.” (39) But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

Here is Ryle again:

The principle laid down in these words is of deep importance. The Scriptures contain all that we need to know in order to be saved, and a messenger from the world beyond the grave could add nothing to them. It is not more evidence which is needed in order to make men repent, but more heart and will to make use of what they already know.

If the dead rose from their graves to instruct us, they could tell us nothing more than what the Bible already contains. After the first novelty of their testimony was worn away, we would care no more for their words than the words of any other. This wretched waiting for something which we have not, and neglect of what we already have is the ruin of thousands of souls. Faith, simple faith in the Scriptures which we already possess, is the first thing needful to salvation.

The man who has the Bible and can read it and yet waits for more

evidence before he becomes a decided Christian is only deceiving himself. Unless he awakens from his delusion, he will die in his sins and be forever in the torments of hell.

Ryle, J. C.. Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of Luke: A Commentary (Updated Edition) (pp. 343-344). Aneko Press. Kindle Edition.

Heb 1:1-2 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, (2) but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

And where do we find Jesus, this Son of God? Where do we hear His words? In Moses, in the Prophets, in the Gospels, and in the Epistles of the Apostles. In other words, *in the Bible*.

Soon we will begin our reading through Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress in the first hour each

Sunday. (These sessions will be livestreamed for our online members as well). This is how the story begins:

AS I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a Den, and I laid me down in that place to sleep: and, as I slept, I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and behold, I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back.

Bunyan, John. *The Pilgrim's Progress* graceflow.org. Kindle Edition.

A book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. What had happened to him? He read the Bible and as he read, the Holy Spirit began to terrorize him with the Law, with awareness of his sin, with the reality of death and coming judgment and hell.

The Bible is the ordinary way that God works to declare His Word

and will to us. It is this Word which His Spirit empowers to strike us dead in our sin, and then to heal us with the gospel:

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

I heard an evil man, a fool, once say – “The Bible is a book written by man for man.” And with that statement he dismissed God and gave up his soul to hell, where he is right to this day and where he will be forever and ever. Now he knows, but now is too late. I have no doubt at all that this man had never read a single word in the Bible. He found that foolish statement somewhere or heard another fool say it, and he embraced it and thought himself so wise in doing so.

As you read the biographies of people like John Bunyan or Martin Luther or J.C. Ryle or Lloyd Jones

or the Wesleys or George Whitefield, you will always, always, always find that it was the Bible that God used to awaken them out of the death slumbers. The man who refuses to read or hear the Scriptures is a man for whom there is no hope.

I have heard people say (in fact I heard a young woman say this very thing not long ago) – *“I am just not a reader.”* That is a foolish, illogical, inconsistent excuse. I will translate what it really means: *“I am just not interested in hearing what God has to say about my soul.”* So that when I hand a book to someone, be it a Bible or a book of scriptural sermons or articles which faithfully expound the Bible, and their response is – *Oh, I am just not a reader* – then I know I am talking to an unsaved person. What they mean is, *“I do not want to hear God.”*

There are many such people in churches, people who claim to be Christians. One such man came up to me many years ago after the worship service and said, “your sermons have great content, but as

[LUKE 16:19-31 \(PT 5\)](#)

soon as it is noon, my attention span ends and I can’t listen anymore.” This man, mind you, was a Bible college graduate.

And yet, God Himself tells us this about His Word in the hands of a person who is born again:

Psa 119:10-16 With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! (11) I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. (12) Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes! (13) With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. (14) In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. (15) I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. (16) I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

Had the Rich Man in Jesus’ parable found Moses and the Prophets to be sweeter than honey to him? Of course not. He only had time for himself. And now he has all the time in hell – if you can even speak of time in eternity.

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2Ti 3:14-17 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it (15) and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (16) All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, (17) that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

We hold, YOU hold this very Scripture in your hands. You have it printed. You have it with you constantly on your phone. You have it taught to you in podcasts, in online studies, in books containing faithful expositions of this Word. And it is this Word which is spoken by God Himself, the means by which He teaches us, reproves and corrects us, trains us in righteousness, so that we might be complete, equipped to know Him and serve Him.

The person who refuses to read and heed and hear that Word will not escape in that Day:

Heb 2:1-3a Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. (2) For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, (3) how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? ...

May we all never forget this powerful parable of the Lord – the Rich Man and Lazarus – heed it and believe it so that we find on that day when our earthly life ends, angels come to escort us to heaven as they did Lazarus, and the torments of hell are a place we never see.