

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

“Let’s not fall into the fallacy of thinking that unless we are big, we are going to be ineffective. One with God is a majority. So often God has done some of the most amazing things in the whole history of the church through remnants.” (Lloyd Jones)

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The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment (Part 1)

February 15, 2026

Sermon Text: Luke 16:19-31
(The Rich Man and Lazarus)

Scripture Reading: Luke 12:13-21 (The Rich Fool)

In his excellent book, *The Doctrine of Endless Punishment*, W.G.T. Shedd (1820-1894, a Presbyterian pastor and theologian) introduces his subject this way:

“Though the author [Shedd] does not linger on the terror of Endless Punishment, he is not unmoved by

it. This doctrine lays its solemn weight upon every life, even the most careless. No one is wholly indifferent to what may await beyond the grave. The fall and eternal ruin of an immortal soul is the most fearful reality we can conceive.

That some of God’s rational, self-determined creatures will remain forever in rebellion against Him is a thought filled with sorrow and dread. Yet, given the nature of finite free will, it is a real possibility—and Scripture presents it as fact, as plainly as it teaches the incarnation and redemption.

The Christian ministry and the church did not invent this doctrine

of eternal judgment. It was entrusted to them *by Christ Himself*, in His final commission, as truth to be proclaimed to every person. If they fail in this duty, Christ's warning to the church at Ephesus applies: "Remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come to you quickly, and will remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent."....

The most compassionate course for preacher and hearer is to follow God's revealed Word and teach the truth plainly and accurately. Eternal perdition, like any real danger, *must be believed to be escaped; disbelief leads surely to destruction*. To be warned is to be prepared. Those who see danger ahead avoid it, but "the simple pass on and are punished."

In general, those who believe in hell and fear it—as Christ commands—will escape it; those who deny it and mock it will fall into it. Therefore, the minister of Christ must speak of it as plainly, solemnly, and tenderly as Christ

did: "When He came near and saw the city, He wept over it, saying, 'If only you had known, even on this day, what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.'"

The doctrinal impact of Universalism [and in our day increasingly, Annihilationism] must not be overlooked. *To reject the teaching of Endless Punishment undermines the entire gospel. Salvation assumes there is something to be saved from. If a person denies they deserve eternal death, they cannot be saved from it while they continue in that denial.* If their denial is true, then salvation is unnecessary. If it is false, the error blocks repentance, and without repentance, there is no forgiveness.

Shedd, William. The Doctrine of Endless Punishment (pp. 4-6). Scroll Reader. Kindle Edition.

And John Bunyan also felt compelled to write on this subject in his exposition of the same text we are turning to once more, Luke

16:19-31, The Rich Man and Lazarus. He titled his series “A Few Sighs from Hell – or – The Groans of a Damned Soul” – and opened with these words:

“Friend, because it is a dangerous thing to be walking towards the place of darkness and anguish; and again, because it is the journey that most of the poor souls in the world are taking, and that with delight and gladness, as if there was the only happiness to be found — I have therefore thought it my duty, being made sensible of the danger that will befall those who walk therein — for the preventing of you, O you poor man or woman! to tell you, by opening this parable, what sad success those souls have had, and are also likely to have, who have been, or shall be found persevering therein. We use to count him a friend, who will forewarn his neighbor of the danger, when he knows thereof, and also sees that the way his neighbor is walking in, leads right thereto, especially when we think that our neighbor may be either ignorant or careless of his way.”

Bunyan, John. A FEW SIGHTS FROM HELL: The Groans of a Damned Soul (p. 7). MAGNA GRATIA Ministries. Kindle Edition.

Follow then as I read these words of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Luk 16:19-31 "Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. (20) "And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, (21) and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.

(22) "Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.

(23) "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and *saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. (24) "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have

mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'

(25) "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. (26) 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.'

(27) "And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house— (28) for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

(29) "But Abraham *said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' (30) "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' (31) "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they

will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

NOTE: The emphasis is on the rich man in hell. Remember that it is the Lord Jesus Himself who is speaking to us here. Christ spoke more on eternal punishment in hell than anyone and certainly this is intentional. If anyone else had been the primary teacher of the subject, man in his sin would more easily deny the doctrine. But each of us must keep this in mind when we think of the terrible truth of the lost in hell forever and ever – it is no other than the Son of God who issues these warnings. And that is why He focuses here more on the rich man than on Lazarus. His primary intent is to warn everyone to repent and believe the gospel.

Our Present Life has Eternal Consequences

Luk 16:19-21 "Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. (20) "And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with

sores, (21) and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.

One of the fundamental truths of this story (I say “story” rather than “parable” because Jesus did not begin it with “Eternity is *like*,” but simply said “There *was*.”) And so one of the fundamental truths of this *story* of a certain rich man and a beggar named Lazarus is this:

“Right now counts forever. Our lives in this present world have eternal consequences in the next.”

Two men. One very rich, living for the moment. Clothed in purple and fine linen, feasting in excess every day. Another nearly naked, pleading for mere crumbs. Covered with sores, licked by the dogs.

Judging by Appearances Leads to Wrong Conclusions

Listen to Bunyan on this:

“If only these two verses had been spoken by Jesus Christ, nearly all the world would have cast a wrong interpretation on them. If Jesus had said only this much, the world would have made this conclusion:

“Then the rich man was certainly the happy man.”

For at first view it represents such a thing; but take all together, that is, read the whole parable, and you shall find that there is no man in a worse condition than he, as I shall clearly hold forth afterward. Again,

if a man would judge men according to outward appearances, he shall oftentimes miss his mark.

Here is a man who, to outward appearances, appears as the only blessed man — better by far than the beggar, inasmuch as he is rich — and the beggar poor; he is well clothed — but the beggar is nearly naked; he feasted lavishly every day — but the beggar would be glad to have dog's food. “He desired to be fed with the crumbs

which fell from the rich man's table." The rich man feasted lavishly every day — but the beggar is glad for a bit when he can get it.

Oh, who would not be in the rich man's state? A wealthy man, with all sorts of new suits and dainty dishes every day, has enough to make one who minds nothing but his belly, his back, and his lusts to say, "Oh, that I were in that man's condition! Oh, that I had as much as that man has! Then I would live a life indeed; then I would have heart's ease aplenty; then I would live pleasantly, and might say to my soul, 'Soul, be of good cheer; eat, drink, and be merry. You have everything aplenty, and are in a most blessed condition.'"

This is the conclusion with those who judge according to outward appearances. But if the whole parable is well considered, you will see that that which is held in high estimation with men — is an abomination in the sight of God."

Bunyan, John. A FEW SIGHS FROM HELL

We do not know the background of either man. We aren't told how the rich man became rich, nor are we told how Lazarus came into the lowly condition he was in. We do know this however:

- The rich man was an ungodly, uncaring worldling, a man who was a Jew, who had knowledge of the Law of God, but who disobeyed it and lived to himself.
- Lazarus was also a Jew, but he was a true child of Abraham. He lived by faith in the Lord and was not some drunkard who sinned himself into his beggarly state.

However, judging from outward appearances — as Bunyan points out — most people would have regarded the rich man as the one blessed by God and Lazarus as one forsaken by Him. Most would have envied the rich man and wished that they

could be him, all the while detesting Lazarus. However:

“That that which is held in high estimation with men — is an abomination in the sight of God.”
[Ibid]

The First Shall be Last

There is great encouragement in this for us if we are true children of God and thus in Christ. Consider what is true of us as was true in Corinth –

1Co 1:26-29 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; (27) but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, (28) and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, (29) so that no man may boast before God.

Over and over again we have it emphasized in Scripture:

Luk 18:10-14 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. (11) "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. (12) 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' (13) "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' (14) "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The first shall be last and the last shall be first.

Isa 53:1-3 Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? (2) For He grew up before Him

like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. (3) He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

I say this is not only wisdom to understand but it is great encouragement as well. Consider:

Who is regarded today as “great” in the visible church? What kind of “church” is envied and considered surely blessed by God? What kind of preacher? You know the answer given by the world and by the counterfeit Christian – the big, the celebrity, the famous. But these forms which claim to be of Christ are in reality *the rich man*. We are Lazarus – if we are truly born again and suffering for Christ.

Can you see just how vital this is for us to understand? The devil and

the world will try to discourage us because we are small, we are not envied, we are not regarded by Christendom as a model to be followed. We do not enjoy popularity. But what do we have here in God’s own Word?

Luk 6:24-26 "But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. (25) "Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. (26) "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.

Here is Bunyan once more:

“From this we observe that those who judge according to outward appearances, for the most part, judge amiss (John 7:24). Those who look upon their outward enjoyments as tokens of God’s special grace to them, are also deceived (Rev. 3:17). *For here in the parable, a man of wealth and a child of the devil may be the same person; a man may have an*

abundance of outward enjoyments — and yet be carried by the devils into eternal burnings! (Luke 12:20).

This is the trap in which the devil has caught many thousands of poor souls, namely by getting them to judge according to outward appearances, or according to God's outward blessings. Ask a poor, carnal, covetous wretch — how we should know a man to be in a happy state, and he will answer, "Those whom God blesses and gives an abundance of this world to." Yet, for the most part, they are the cursed men.

Alas! Poor men, they are so ignorant as to think that because a man is increased in outward things — therefore God loves that man with a special love, or else He would never do so much for him, never bless him so, and prosper the work of his hands.

Ah! Poor soul, it is the rich man who goes to Hell. "The rich man died, and in Hell [mark it, 'in Hell'] he lifted up his eyes." To see how the great ones of the world go

strutting up and down the streets, makes me wonder. Surely they look upon themselves to be the only happy men; but it is because they judge according to outward appearances. They look upon themselves to be the only blessed men, when the Lord knows the generality are left out of that blessed condition. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called" (1 Cor. 1:26). [Ibid]

The Rich Man and Lazarus Both Represent the Two Classes of Men

The Lord Jesus did not tell this story simply as something that happened to two individuals in history. It did, of course. They were real men. But the Lord's intent here is to show us that there are only two classes of human beings — those under God's condemnation and those under His blessing. The rich man represents all sinners who reject Christ. Lazarus represents all true saints.

This being so, we are to learn that the wicked, those outside of Christ, look to the world for their living and are generally regarded as “wise” by the world. On the other hand, what is true of the Christian? He or she is a Lazarus – regarded by the world with contempt. A fool held in disgust by the worldlings.

And while the Christian may not suffer in this life by being covered with sores as Lazarus was, nevertheless we know that every one of Christ’s people *suffer in this life, hated by the world*. We are meant to see this truth as we consider Lazarus.

Luk 16:21 and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man’s table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.

Lazarus was not welcomed into the rich man’s house, nor was he offered any kind of help. And so it is in this world for the Christian – Christ’s people are not welcomed by the world. They are kept “outside.” You see this in the

Lord’s condemnation of those counterfeit hypocrites who will come to Him saying, “Lord, Lord...” –

Mat 25:41-45 "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; (42) **for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink;** (43) I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' (44) "Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' (45) "Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'

Do not expect to be welcomed or embraced by the world if you are truly a Christian. And never judge by outward appearances in this

respect, thinking that a Christian needs to be well thought of by the world. Our Lord Himself was despised and rejected by men, hated by the world. And He told us in advance that so it will be with us in this present life.

But Soon this Life is Over

Lazarus spent his days in this world as a poor beggar covered with sores. The rich man enjoyed everything the world could offer. BUT it soon came to a sudden end:

Luk 16:22 "Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.

The hours of our lives are drawing to a close like those grains of sand in an hourglass. Our time is short and running out. This is true of both young and old. The years sail by and soon we must every one pass into eternity. So it was with the rich man and with Lazarus, and so it surely will be for you and for me.

When that day came for these two men, everything was radically changed, as we shall see next time.

What will it be for you? Eternal life or Eternal torment? These are the only two destinations decreed for man. "*I am in anguish in this flame,*" we will hear the rich man cry. There he was, there he is, and there he will be forever, and ever, and ever. Think on these things soberly and carefully. Examine yourself. Are you a worldling or a saint? Have you been born again or are you still in your natural condition? These are the ultimate questions for every human being to ask and answer with ruthless honesty.