

# **“In My Father’s House”**

***The Theme of TEMPLE from Genesis to Revelation -  
What the Bible is All About From Start to Finish***

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**Title:** Walking on the Edge – of Hell

**Text:** Luke 16:19-31

**Reading:** Luke 16:19-31

**Christ Reformation Church**

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## **Introduction**

Recently Verla and I drove down the Otter Crest Loop just north of Newport which follows right along the coastline. There are very high, rocky cliffs that drop right off into the ocean. At one point where the drop-off was particularly close, there was a sign posted – *Stay Back From Edge – Use Bike Path*. And I remember thinking as I read it that here was a great sermon illustration. You KNOW that numbers of people are going to see that sign, and ignore it. They are going to get as close to the edge of the cliff as they can. Some, over the years along the Oregon Coast, have gone over and perished. One little mis-step, one small pebble to roll – and they fell to their death on the rocks and into the smashing breakers below.

Many, many people today – perhaps even some of you – are going through life doing the very same thing when it comes to heeding the warnings of God’s Word. Every moment of this life is walked upon the very edge of eternity. Christ tells us to flee to safety *right now* – to walk in the right Way – by believing in Him as our Savior, by obeying Him, by repenting of our sin and asking Him to show us His saving mercy. And yet – so many – most, in fact – do not heed the warning. They walk on the edge of

eternal torment in Hell, and this very day – all around the world – many have forever fallen into it's open pit.

Every human being at this very moment who is without Christ is walking on the edge of Hell's precipice. Why don't they fall right now? Do not think it is the Devil who keeps them balanced – he would do all that he can to see them hurled over the edge. And do not think that it is the person themselves that keep them safe – every single one who fancies their ability will one day go over. As Jonathan Edwards said, it is only the very One Whom such sinners are defying that keeps them balanced – but one day He will also let them go if they do not repent and turn to the right Way, which is Christ.

This morning, it is my purpose to follow up on last week's message about the reality and eternity of Hell. My method is to turn your attention to the Scripture we have already read this morning – the account of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Luke 16. I am in particular going to emphasize to you the following two points –

- 1). The Horrible Danger of Walking on the Edge
  - a. The Rich Man as an example **vss 19-22**
  - b. What is he thinking? (see also the rich fool)**
- 2) The Terrible State of Those Who Depart this Life Without Christ
  - a. It is *real* – **emphasize tongue, eyes, in anguish vss 23-25**
  - b. It is *forever* – **great gulf fixed vs 26**
- 3) The Certain and Only Rescue From Hell
  - a. HEAR the Word of God, BELIEVE it, OBEY it (**Moses and Prophets**) **vss 27-31 YOU MUST BECOME A CHILD OF ABRAHAM.**

## **I. The Horrible Danger of Walking this Life Without Christ**

Luke 16:19-22 ESV

(19) "There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.

(20) And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores,  
(21) who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. (22) **The poor man died** and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. **The rich man also died** and was buried,

Luke 16:19-22 NBLH

(19) "Había cierto hombre rico que se vestía de púrpura y lino fino, celebrando cada día fiestas con esplendidez.

(20) "Y un pobre llamado Lázaros que se tiraba en el suelo a su puerta cubierto de llagas,

(21) ansiaba saciarse de las migajas que caían de la mesa del rico; además, hasta los perros venían y le lamían las llagas.

(22) "**Sucedió que murió el pobre** y fue llevado por los ángeles al seno de Abraham; **y murió también el rico y fue sepultado.**

### A. The Rich Man as an Example of Life on the Edge

The Rich Man (we will call him ‘Dives’ – a Latin name often used for him), lived his life on the edge. But not in the sense that we use that phrase today in the sense of “pushing the envelope” or of having no fear, constantly trying new things. No. Dives lived his life on the edge of a precipice that was the opening to hell.

Now for all appearances, Dives was on solid ground. He was –

1. Rich – lacking nothing. He appeared secure.
2. Happy – wearing the best clothes, partying every day. Every day of his life was a party with, no doubt, many friends.

As there was a gate to his estate – we can no doubt conclude that he lived in a mansion. His estate was his earthly “heaven.” He cared about his appearance and bought the best wardrobe available. He was *the envy of everyone who knew about him.*

But Dives was on the edge – he walked every moment of his life right at the precipice of eternal torment.

I remember many years ago listening to a sermon on this Scripture preached by Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse. He emphasized that, curiously, this story does not begin like the parables Jesus told. A parable is a word-picture to help us understand something by illustrating it. *The kingdom of heaven is like....* “Like” is the key word. But here, there is no “like.” Jesus simply says – *There was a rich man...and there was a poor man – and by the way, his name was Lazarus....* It is, therefore, very probable that Jesus is giving us a true account of two actual men. No fiction here – neither before nor after they die. It is real.

### **B. The Mentality of Life on the Edge – Unbelief**

Now, Dives and Lazarus were Jews. This means that both of them had “Moses and the Prophets,” as Abraham indicates later in the story. That is simply the Old Testament phrase for the Scriptures, the Word of God. Dives, and even his brothers, had a knowledge of God’s Word.

So, what was Dives thinking as he lived his life, moment by moment, precariously balanced on the edge of hell? What was he thinking? Well, obviously he was a man who had a contempt for God. How do we know? Because the Old Testament Scriptures are *filled* with instruction to love one’s neighbor, to care for the helpless, to use one’s wealth for the good of others, and so on. But Dives disdained God’s Word. He held God Himself in contempt. Knowingly. This poor beggar was right there, suffering. He only wanted crumbs. Yet Dives withheld even those from him.

Dives and another rich fool shared the same worldview –

Luke 12:16-21 ESV

(16) And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully,

(17) and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?'

(18) And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. (19) And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' (20) But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'

(21) So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

Luke 12:16-21 NBLH

(16) Entonces les contó una parábola: "La tierra de cierto hombre rico había producido mucho.

(17) "Y él pensaba dentro de sí: '¿Qué haré, ya que no tengo dónde almacenar mis cosechas?'

(18) "Entonces dijo: 'Esto haré: derribaré mis graneros y edificaré otros más grandes, y allí almacenaré todo mi grano y mis bienes.

(19) 'Y diré a mi alma: alma, tienes muchos bienes depositados para muchos años; descansa, come, bebe, diviértete.'

(20) "Pero Dios le dijo: '¡Necio! Esta misma noche te reclaman el alma; y ahora, ¿para quién será lo que has provisto?'

(21) "Así es el que acumula tesoro para sí, y no es rico para con Dios."

Such men's mentality is that they are their own gods. That they have the final say over how many years of life they have left. That life consists in possessions and popularity. But what is the reality? That rich fool was summoned before God that very night, and the rich man turned out to be a poor man when it came to his standing before God. Dives joined the rich fool in hell.

To Dives and to the rich fool, security and safety lay in getting as much of this world as one can. To most who walked by Dives' estate, Dives was secure and blessed by God, while the poor, sore-covered beggar at the gate

was cursed. But appearances in this world are deceiving. *Things are not usually what they appear to be.*

Men and women – we all are at the brink of eternity. In the next second, God could call us out of this world. *Are you rich toward God?* Where is your treasure? That which you set your heart upon is your god. That which you love is your god. Do not tell yourself that you have many, many years left in your life. You do not, even if you live to be 100. We all fancy ourselves living long lives – but it is very foolish for us to think that we all will. God determines our days, not we ourselves.

## **II. The Terrible State of Those Who Depart this Life Without Christ**

### **A. Hell is Real vss 23-25**

Scene change –

Luk 16:23-25 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.

Luk 16:23-25 "En el Hades (la región de los muertos) el rico alzó sus ojos, estando en tormentos, y vio a Abraham a lo lejos, y a Lázaro en su seno. (24) "Y gritando, dijo: 'Padre Abraham, ten misericordia de mí, y envía a Lázaro para que moje la punta de su dedo en agua y refresque mi lengua, pues estoy en agonía en esta llama.' (25) "Pero Abraham le dijo: 'Hijo, recuerda que durante tu vida recibiste tus bienes, y Lázaro, igualmente, males; pero ahora él es consolado aquí, y tú estás en agonía.

Hell is real. The pit which the rich man had so long defied, had now swallowed him up. He was there, and he was there instantly. *The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment....*

Do people think that somehow they will have time...have some chance to deal with God when they die? It is a dream. A fiction. After death comes judgment. In a mere moment, Dives fell over the cliff into Hell, and there he was – forever.

Now, lest we fancy ourselves quite sophisticated, let's look at some very plain, obvious facts about the condition of the wicked in Hell.

1. The death of the wicked contrasted with the death of the righteous. Lazarus, a child of Abraham, was escorted into Abraham's presence by God's angels. The rich man was thrown into a hole in the ground.
2. Though these events precede the final resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked, when we leave this life, we have some kind of body. Lazarus had a finger. Dives had a tongue and eyes. Precisely what the nature of the body is in what we call the intermediate state, Christ is telling us that we will have the capacity for bliss or torment. DO NOT MISS THIS!
  - a. *...and in Hades, being in torment...I am in anguish in this flame...you are in anguish...into this place of torment.* These are the phrases describing the condition of the wicked the moment they leave this world.
  - b. Ultimately, Hades and all who are in it will be cast into the Lake of Fire –

Rev 20:10-15 and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (11) Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found

for them. (12) And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. (13) And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. (14) Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (15) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Rev 20:10-15 Y el diablo que los engañaba fue arrojado al lago de fuego y azufre, donde también están la bestia y el falso profeta. Y serán atormentados día y noche por los siglos de los siglos. (11) Vi un gran trono blanco y a Aquél que *estaba* sentado en él, de cuya presencia huyeron la tierra y el cielo, y no se halló lugar para ellos. (12) También vi a los muertos, grandes y pequeños, de pie delante del trono, y *los* libros (rollos) fueron abiertos. Otro libro (rollo) fue abierto, que es *el Libro* de la Vida, y los muertos fueron juzgados por lo que estaba escrito en los libros (rollos), según sus obras. (13) El mar entregó los muertos que estaban en él, y la Muerte y el Hades (la región de los muertos) entregaron a los muertos que estaban en ellos. Y fueron juzgados, cada uno según sus obras. (14) La Muerte y el Hades fueron arrojados al lago de fuego. Esta es la muerte segunda: el lago de fuego. (15) Y el que no se encontraba inscrito en el Libro de la Vida fue arrojado al lago de fuego.

Do not think that these are just myths concocted and invented by men to frighten people into obeying their particular religion. Christ Himself spoke more of Hell than anyone else did, and He warned us that it is a place that is –

- A Hell of fire
- An outer darkness
- A place of weeping and gnashing of teeth
- Where fire is not quenched and the worm does not die



These are the Words of Christ! Do any one of us set ourselves above Him? Do we accuse the Son of God of not being loving enough?

Men and women, here is the sober, plain fact give us by God's own Word – *You are going to depart this life. When you do, you will immediately and FOREVER be in Hell or in the blessed, glorious presence of God. As a man departs this world, so shall he be for all eternity.*

And in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes...Hell is real. Those who enter it will spend eternity there in real, resurrected bodies.

### **B. Hell is Forever**

Can we not see that it is the love of Christ that impels Him to speak these warnings? He even drives home to us that this torment is forever –

Luk 16:26 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.'

Luk 16:26 'Además de todo esto, hay un gran abismo puesto entre nosotros y ustedes, de modo que los que quieran pasar de aquí a ustedes no pueden, y tampoco nadie puede cruzar de allá a nosotros.'

Eternity is a fixed condition. Next Sunday we will plan to consider recent false teaching among evangelicals that Hell is only temporary and that all who enter it will one day emerge believing in Christ, so that all will end in heaven. Christ plainly states this is not true. Those in Hades can NEVER cross to the presence of Abraham and all who are his heirs by faith in Christ.

Do I hear someone objecting? The Scripture will simply say – *who are you to answer back to God? Do you know all things? Were you here when God formed the creation? Do you even understand how the seasons*

*come, or how molecules hold together or why birds migrate? Tell me, if you know – this is the answer of God. Will the creature say to the Creator – why have You done this?*

### **III. The Certain and Only Rescue From Hell vss 27-31**

Luk 16:27-31 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.'"

Luk 16:27-31 "Entonces él dijo: 'Te ruego, pues, padre, que lo envíes a la casa de mi padre, (28) pues tengo cinco hermanos, de modo que él los prevenga, para que ellos no vengan también a este lugar de tormento.' (29) "Pero Abraham dijo: 'Ellos tienen a Moisés y a los Profetas; que los oigan a ellos.' (30) "Y el rico contestó: 'No, padre Abraham, sino que si alguien va a ellos de entre los muertos, se arrepentirán.' (31) "Pero *Abraham* le contestó: 'Si no escuchan a Moisés y a los Profetas, tampoco se persuadirán si alguien se levanta de entre los muertos.'"

Now, too late – Dives considers his brothers – 5 of them. Notice Dives' accusatory mentality here –

***“God, you have not adequately warned me nor others of this fate. You need to do more. Send Lazarus back from the dead to the living and have him preach to them and warn them about this place of torment and then they will believe and repent.”***

He is insistent. He knows better. This is a wicked, blasphemous accusation – have you ever made it? Have you ever accused God of being unjust in His ways? Of needing to do more than He has done to save

sinner from Hell? And yet God has spoken. He had spoken to Dives and to his 5 brothers through Moses and all of the Old Testament prophets. But they rejected all of them.

YOU have the Bible. YOU have more from God than Dives did. This is why the Apostle to the Hebrews wrote –

Heb 2:1-4 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? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, (4) while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Heb 2:1-4 Por tanto, debemos prestar mucha mayor atención a lo que hemos oído, no sea que nos desviemos. (2) Porque si la palabra hablada por medio de ángeles resultó ser inmutable (firme), y toda transgresión y desobediencia recibió una justa retribución, (3) ¿cómo escaparemos nosotros si descuidamos una salvación tan grande? La cual, después que fue anunciada primeramente por medio del Señor, nos fue confirmada por los que la oyeron. (4) Dios testificó junto con ellos, tanto por señales como por prodigios, y por diversos milagros y por dones repartidos del Espíritu Santo según Su propia voluntad.

Sending Lazarus back, as we have noted, would entail a resurrection from the dead. Lazarus had died. But Abraham speaks the truth to Dives – *neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead*. And here then is the great principle –

***“Faith begins with the fear of God. Faith hears what God says and believes it, not demanding further proof. ‘An evil generation seeks for a sign,’ as Jesus put it. If a person refuses to believe what God has said in His Word, neither will such a person believe even if God raised someone***

***from the dead in front of witnesses. So it was when Christ publicly raised another Lazarus from the dead (John 11). And so it is with every human being alive today. God has raised His Son from the dead as the ultimate and final evidence that Christ is who He says He is. If we will not believe what God has spoken already, neither will we believe regardless of how much additional proof we might demand.”***

Act 17:30-31 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, (31) because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Act 17:30-31 "Por tanto, habiendo pasado por alto los tiempos de ignorancia, Dios declara ahora a todos los hombres, en todas partes, que se arrepientan. (31) "Porque El ha establecido un día en el cual juzgará al mundo en justicia, por medio de un Hombre a quien El ha designado, habiendo presentado pruebas a todos los hombres cuando Lo resucitó de entre los muertos."

Christ is the ONLY way of rescue from Hell. He is the full and complete sacrifice provided by God by which our sins can be forgiven and through whom we can be set right with God. Heaven is real – the New Heavens and the New Earth. But Hell is real as well. One day, very soon or perhaps much later, every single person here is going to pass out of this life and instantly be in the glorious presence of God or in the torment of hell – forever. Children. Young people. Old people. All of us.

The question therefore that we leave you with is this – ***“Are your feet planted firmly on the Rock, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will most certainly take you safely into the Father’s House? Or are you living on the edge, each moment and step of your life carried out on the very precipice of Hell? If you remain on that precipice, one day your feet will surely slip, and you will instantly join Dives and the Rich Fool and all the billions who have refused to hear God’s Word.”***

Isa 1:18-20 "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. (19) If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; (20) but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."