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Tillamook, Oregon

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## *Hell is Truth Known Too Late – The Rich Man and Lazarus* [Part 2]

*August 21, 2022*

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

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 12:35-59

We return this morning to the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke’s Gospel in order to resume a careful hearing of this remarkable portion of Scripture. Listen as I read it once more, and take care that we all receive it for what it is – the Word of God:

Luk 16:19-31 “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, (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.’”

We left off last time at this point:

(22) The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's

side. The rich man also died and was buried,

What a great leveler death is. Whatever castes, or social standing, whatever power or fame or weakness or anonymity a person has in this life – everything comes to level ground by death. And so it was with this Rich Man and Lazarus. They both died and the first became last, and the last became first.

1Ti 6:7 for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.

The Rich Man was a fool. He lived as if he would never die. He lived as if he would always have his earthly wealth – as if he could “take it with him.” But now this radical, final change has happened. Death came one day for him.

He was just like his spiritual relative:

Luck 12:18-21 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.”

*generations – it will not come with you.* Only heavenly treasure laid up by knowing and following Christ will be there, but you may have a statue built for your memory in the center of town, there may even be towns named after you, or huge buildings or parks or freeways...*but none of it will come with you.* And yet like this Rich Man, very typically it is these kinds of things that people devote their lives to.

Do you understand this? *Nothing that belongs to this present world, the things which men and women typically give themselves to possess, will come with us. Naked we came and naked we will leave:*

Luk 16:22 The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried,

- Fame
- Reputation
- Possessions
- A Name left for posterity – a legacy

NONE of it goes with us. Think very carefully on this – it is very likely that your thinking about it is skewed. *When you depart this world, even if you have given your life to leaving a legacy, a remembrance, to future*

We are not told how these two men died. Most probably Lazarus (he is mentioned first here in vs 22) died first – no doubt of his physical ailments. The Rich Man, if he even noticed, was probably happy to have Lazarus gone. But one day, death visited him too. Perhaps he lived to an old age, or maybe some other form of death met him. But he died and his body was buried...but it is not the end of the story. Largely, it is just the

beginning – the beginning of eternity.

Death may come slowly to us, or it may come unexpectedly in a flash. When it comes to you, will you be found clothed in the righteousness of Christ, or will you be like this fool:

Mat 22:11-13 “But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. (12) And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. (13) Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Death was the great awakening for the Rich Man, but it was an awakening too late. He entered eternity without Christ, the door was closed, and it was too late. That instant in which he died, he saw it:

Luk 16:23-24 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.’

You heard R.C. Sproul recently speak about Jesus’ sobering answer to the question – “Lord, are there few who will be saved?” And Sproul reminded us that Jesus spoke more about hell than he did about heaven! Why? *Because people in their sin are not at all troubled (as Martin Luther was troubled – even terrified) with the question...how can a sinner be reconciled to a holy God?* Most people assume they are going to heaven and all will be well. No doubt that was the case of this Rich Man. He was Jew. He knew about Abraham and Moses and the Prophets. And he assumed all was well for him.

This Scripture before us *focuses our attention primarily upon the Rich Man in hell rather than*

*Lazarus in heaven.* And this is intentional. Jesus wants us to wake up and have the real fear of God put into us so that *we do not end at the same place this Rich Man did!* To awaken us NOW rather than THEN when it is too late and literally our fate is sealed. Listen to John Bunyan again, words from his sermon, *A Few Sighs from Hell*:

For, as I said before, it is evident, that they who live after the flesh in the lusts thereof, do not really and seriously think on death, and the judgment that doth follow after: neither do they indeed endeavour so to do;  
Bunyan, Bunyan. *The Works of John Bunyan, complete, including 58 books . B&R Samizdat Express. Kindle Edition.*

But then death came:

Luk 16:23 and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

He lifted up his eyes. Something he should have done long before. Here

was his awakening, but it was too late.

We know that the wicked will one Day, when Christ comes again, be cast into their final abode:

Rev 20:11-15 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.

Hades, therefore, is not the final place of the wicked. The term “hell” in the New Testament seems to be used in several different ways. It can represent Satan and his kingdom (“the gates of hell”), or it can mean the final place where the wicked will be cast at the judgment, or it can be used rather synonymously for “Hades.” Hades is that place of torment where the wicked go upon death and await the final judgment of Christ. It is the Lake of Fire which will be their final and eternal destination.

So here is this Rich Man in Hades. He “lifted up his eyes and saw...”. Do not quickly pass by this statement. Bunyan lingers on it:

'In hell he lifted up his eyes,' he adds, 'being in torments.' As if he had said, though once they shut their eyes, though once they were willingly ignorant (2 Peter 3:5), yet, when they depart into hell, they shall be so miserably handled and tormented, that they shall be forced to lift up their eyes.

While men live in this world, and are in a natural state, they will have a good conceit of themselves, and of their condition--they will conclude that they are Christians, that Abraham is their father, and their state to be as good as the best (Matt 3:7-9). They will conclude they have faith, the Spirit, a good hope, and an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ; but then, when they drop into hell, and lift up their eyes there, and behold first their soul to be in extreme torments; their dwelling to be the bottomless pit; their company thousands of damned souls; also the innumerable company of devils; and the hot scalding vengeance of God, not only to drop, but to fall very violently upon them; then they will begin to be awakened, who all their lifetime were in a dead sleep. I say, when this comes to pass, lo it will; then in hell they shall lift up their eyes, in the midst of torments they shall lift up their eyes.

[The Works of John Bunyan, complete, including 58 books . B&R Samizdat Express. Kindle Edition].

And what did he see? Now that his eyes were opened, though he chose to keep them closed to these things while he was still alive? What does he see now?

Luk 16:23-24 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.'

*He saw that hades/hell is real. His body was buried, but HE was not in the grave. He was in Hades. Death was not the end of existence. It was not guaranteed Paradise to him just because he was a physical descendant of Abraham. And He saw – and felt – that the torments of hell were an “anguish in this flame.”*

How many people in this life scoff at the idea of hell? How many mock any suggestion that God would ever allow anyone (except perhaps Hitler and his kind) to go

to such a place? How many who claim to be the most expert theologians insist that Hell is something other than what the Bible says it is? And yet, the day will come for them when death arrives and THEY are in the same place this Rich Man found himself in. THEY will “lift up their eyes” and see that the place of Christ and His people is *far off* from them and that they are in that same anguishing flame.

And it will be too late. Too late they lifted up their eyes and saw that Christ's Word was true all along, the Word that they mocked and hated.

NOTE: I want to make just one observation here that it is quite possible we are meant to see here. It concerns this:

Joh 19:28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.”

Is it possible, in light of the Rich Man's request for even a drop of

water, that we are meant to understand that in His suffering there on the cross, Christ *went to hell for our sins*? I am not certain of this, but it also could have some connection with the Apostle's Creed confession that Jesus *descended into hell*.

I must quote Bunyan once more – he states it better than I ever could. What is this agony in hell? At least in part it is this:

One part of thy torments [Bunyan speaking to the wicked] will be this, thou shalt have a full sight of all thy ill spent life, from first to last; though here thou canst sin today and forget it by to-morrow, yet there thou shalt be made to remember how thou didst sin against God at such a time, and in such a place, for such a thing, and with such a one, which will be a hell unto thee.

God will 'set them in order before thine eyes' (Psa 51:21). Thou shalt have the guilt of them all lie heavy on thy soul, not only the guilt of one or two, but the guilt of them all

together, and there they shall lie in thy soul, as if thy belly were full of pitch, and set on a light fire.

Here (in this world) men can sometimes think on their sins with delight, but there with unspeakable torment; for that I understand to be the fire that Christ speaketh of, which shall never be quenched (Mar 9:43-49). While men live here, O how doth the guilt of one sin sometimes crush the soul! It makes a man in such plight that he is weary of his life, so that he can neither rest at home nor abroad, neither up nor in bed. Even so, I do know that they have been so tormented with the guilt of one sinful thought, that they have been even at their wits' end, and have hanged themselves.

But now when thou comest into hell, and hast not only one or two, or an hundred sins, with the guilt of them all on thy soul and body, but all the sins that ever thou didst commit since thou camest into the world, altogether clapped on thy conscience at one time, as one should clap a red hot iron to thy

breasts, and there to continue to all eternity: this is miserable.

Again, then thou shalt have brought into thy remembrance the slighting of the gospel of Christ; here thou shalt consider how willing Christ was to come into the world to save sinners, and for what a trifle thou didst reject him. This is plainly held forth in Isaiah 28, where, speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, the foundation of salvation, verse 16, he saith of them that reject the gospel, that, when the overflowing scourge doth pass through the earth, which I understand to be at the end of the world, then, saith he, it shall take you morning by morning, by day and by night shall it pass over you; that is, continually, without any intermission. 'And it shall be a vexation only to understand the report.' '

A vexation,' that is, a torment, or a great part of hell only to understand the report, to understand the good tidings that came into the world by Christ's death for poor sinners. And you will find this verily to be the mind of the Spirit, if you compare it with Isaiah 53:1, where he speaks

[LUKE 16:19-31 \(PT 2\)](#)

of men's turning their backs upon the tenders of God's grace in the gospel, he saith, 'Who hath believed our report?' or the gospel declared by us?

Now this will be a mighty torment to the ungodly, when they shall understand the goodness of God was so great that he even sent his Son out of his bosom to die for sinners, and yet that they should be so foolish as to put him off from one time to another; that they should be so foolish as to lose heaven and Christ, and eternal life in glory, for the society of a company of drunkards; that they should lose their souls for a little sport, for this world, for a strumpet, for that which is lighter than vanity and nothing; I say this will be a very great torment unto thee.

Bunyan, Bunyan. The Works of John Bunyan, complete, including 58 books . B&R Samizdat Express. Kindle Edition.

The Rich Man would not bother himself with such concerns all the time he lived in luxury in this

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world. But that day when death came for him, that day when his body was put in the grave but his soul – who HE was – lifted up his eyes in hell, that day he saw it.

And as we will see next time, *he is still seeing and feeling it now, as he will forever and ever and ever, because between hell and heaven there is such a great gulf fixed by God that no one will ever come out of that place.*

Luk 12:58-59 As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. (59) I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny.”

The sinner’s accuser is God. The only way to settle with Him is repentance from sin and faith in Christ – to be born again and justified by Christ’s righteousness.

No one in hell will ever have that opportunity. They will be paying

and paying and paying – but their just and right judgment forbids that they will ever find that last penny to pay.

Have YOU ever seen your desperate condition? Have YOU ever lifted up your eyes and seen that you were far off from Christ and headed down Broadway to hell? Do you know Christ? Are you born again? These are the real issues that must be dealt with now, before death takes us to that very place the Rich Man is in right now, and tomorrow, and the day and month and year, and centuries after that.