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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 they 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

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.

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.

NOTE: Following is an excerpt from John Bunyan's sermon entitled *The Barren Fig-Tree, or The Doom and Downfall of the Fruitless Professor*. I include it here for you to read and carefully consider.

“Barren fig-tree, dost thou hear what a striving there is between the vine-dresser and the husbandman, for thy life? 'Cut it down,' says one; 'Lord, spare it,' saith the other. It is a cumber-ground [ie, a tree that is worthless, fruitless, and encumbers the ground with its presence], saith the Father; one year longer, prays the Son. 'Let it alone this year also.' Till I shall dig about it, and dung it [ie, fertilize it].

The Lord Jesus by these words supposeth two things, as causes of the want of fruit in a barren fig-tree; and two things he supposeth as a remedy. The things that are a cause of want of fruit are,

First. It is earth-bound. Lord, the fig-tree is earth-bound.

Second. A want of warmer means, of fatter means.

Wherefore, accordingly, he propoundeth to loosen the earth; to dig about it. And then to supply it with dung. 'To dig about it, and dung it. Lord, let it alone this year also, until I shall dig about it.' I doubt it is too much ground-bound.

LUKE 16:19-31 (PT 5)

The love of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches lie too close to the roots of the heart of this professor (Luke 14). The love of riches, the love of honours, the love of pleasures, are the thorns that choke the word. 'For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father,' but enmity to God; how then, where these things bind up the heart, can there be fruit brought forth to God? (1 John 2:15,16).

Barren fig-tree, see how the Lord Jesus, by these very words, suggesteth the cause of thy fruitfulness of soul! *The things of this world lie too close to thy heart; the earth with its things have bound up thy roots; thou art an earth-bound soul, thou art wrapped up in thick clay.*

'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him'; how then can he be fruitful in the vineyard? This kept Judas from the fruit of caring for the poor (John 12:6). This kept Demas from the fruit of self-denial (2 Tim 4:10). And this kept Ananias and

PAGE 10

Sapphira his wife from the goodly fruit of sincerity and truth (Acts 5:5,10).

What shall I say? These are 'foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition; for the love of money is the root of all evil.' How then can good fruit grow from such a root, the root of all evil? 'Which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows' (1 Tim 6:9,10). It is an evil root, nay, it is the root of all evil.

How then can the professor [ie, a person who claims to be a Christian] that hath such a root, or a root wrapped up in such earthly things, as the lusts, and pleasures, and vanities of this world, bring forth fruit to God?

Till I shall 'DIG' about it. Lord, I will loose his roots, I will dig up this earth, I will lay his roots bare; my hand shall be upon him by sickness, by disappointments, by cross providences; I will dig about him until he stands shaking and tottering; until he be ready to fall;

LUKE 16:19-31 (PT 5)

then, if ever, he will seek to take faster hold.

Thus, I say, deals the Lord Jesus oftentimes with the barren professor; he diggeth about him, he smiteth one blow at his heart, another blow at his lusts, a third at his pleasures, a fourth at his comforts, another at his self-conceitedness. Thus he diggeth about him; this is the way to take bad earth from his roots, and to loosen his roots from the earth. Barren fig-tree, see here the care, the love, the labour, and way, which the Lord Jesus, the dresser of the vineyard, is fain to take with thee, if haply thou mayest be made fruitful.[13]

Till I shall dig about it, and 'DUNG' it. As the earth, by binding the roots too closely, may hinder the tree's being fruitful, *so the want of better means may be also a cause thereof.* And this is more than intimated by the dresser of the vineyard; 'Till I shall dig about it and dung it.' I will supply it with a more fruitful ministry, with a warmer word; I will give them pastors after mine own heart; I will dung them. You know dung is a more warm, more

PAGE 11

fat, more hearty, and succouring matter than is commonly the place in which trees are planted. 'I will dig about it, and dung it.' I will bring it under a heart-awakening ministry; the means of grace shall be fat and good: I will also visit it with heart-awakening, heart-warming, heart-encouraging considerations; I will apply warm dung to his roots; I will strive with him by my Spirit, and give him some tastes of the heavenly gift, and the power of the world to come. I am loth to lose him for want of digging. 'Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it.'

And if it bear fruit, WELL. And if the fruits of all my labour doth make this fig-tree fruitful, I shall count my time, my labour, and means, well bestowed upon it; and thou also, O my God, shalt be therewith much delighted; for thou art gracious, and merciful, and repentest thee of the evil which thou threatenest to bring upon a people.

These words, therefore, inform us, that if a barren fig-tree, a barren

professor, shall now at last bring forth fruit to God, it shall go well with that professor, it shall go well with that poor soul. His former barrenness, his former tempting of God, his abuse of God's patience and long-suffering, his mispending year after year, shall now be all forgiven him.

Yea, God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, will not pass by and forget all, and say, 'Well done,' at the last. When I say to the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if he then do that which is lawful and right, if he walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity, he shall surely live, he shall not die (Eze 33).

Barren fig-tree, dost thou hear? the axe is laid to thy roots, the Lord Jesus prays God to spare thee. Hath he been digging about thee? Hath he been dunging of thee? O barren fig-tree, now thou art come to the point; if thou shalt now become good, if thou shalt, after a gracious manner, suck in the gospel-dung, and if thou shalt bring forth fruit unto God, well; but if not, the fire is the last! fruit, or the fire; fruit, or

the fire, barren fig-tree! 'If it bear fruit, well.' And if not, THEN after that thou shalt cut it down.

The Lord Jesus, by this "if" giveth us to understand that there is a generation of professors in the world that are incurable, that will not, that cannot repent, nor be profited by the means of grace. A generation, I say, that will retain a profession, but will not bring forth fruit; a generation that will wear out the patience of God, time and tide, threatenings and intercessions, judgments and mercies, and after all will be unfruitful. O the desperate wickedness that is in thy heart!

Barren professor, dost thou hear? the Lord Jesus stands yet in doubt about thee; there is an IF stands yet in the way. I say, the Lord Jesus stands yet in doubt about thee, whether or no, at last, thou wilt be good [ie, will truly repent and believe in Christ and by being born again bring forth the fruit of the Spirit]; whether he may not labour in vain; whether his digging and dunging will come to more than lost labour; 'I gave her space to

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

repent,--and she repented not' (Rev 2:21). I digged about it, I dunged it; I gained time, and supplied it with means; but I laboured herein in vain, and spent my strength for nought, and in vain!

Dost thou hear, barren fig-tree? there is yet a question, Whether it may be well with thy soul at last? And if not, THEN after that thou shalt cut it down. There is nothing more exasperating to the mind of a man than to find all his kindness and favour slighted; neither is the Lord Jesus so provoked with anything, as when sinners abuse his means of grace; if it be barren and fruitless under my gospel; if it turn my grace into wantonness, if after digging and dunging, and waiting, it yet remain unfruitful, I will let thee cut it down.

Gospel means, applied, is the last remedy for a barren professor; if the gospel, if the grace of the gospel, will not do, there can be nothing expected but cut it down. 'Then after that thou shalt cut it down.' 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto

[PAGE 13](#)

thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' Therefore 'your house is left unto you desolate' (Matt 23:37,38).

Yet it cannot be, but that this Lord Jesus, who at first did put a stop to the execution of his Father's justice, because he desired to try more means with the fig-tree; I say, it cannot be, but that a heart so full of compassion as his is should be touched, to behold this professor must now be cut down. 'And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes' (Luke 19:41,42). After that thou shalt cut it down.

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