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Tillamook, Oregon

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Hell is Truth Known Too Late – The Rich Man and Lazarus [Part 3]

August 28, 2022

Sermon Text: Luke 16:19-31

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 14:3-23

“It is the hard state of the reprobate to do all things too late; to be aware of his lack of saving grace too late; to be sorry for sin too late; to seek repentance too late; to ask for God’s mercy, and to desire to go to heaven, too late.”
[John Bunyan, The Barren Fig Tree]

The Rich Man lifted up his eyes in Hades, and it was too late.

We cannot read God’s Word too often. Hear then, once again, this

sobering Word to us from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself:

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.’

William Hendriksen correctly observes:

[The Rich Man] was not just rich. He belonged to that class of people to whom the epithet *filthy rich* is often applied, and not without reason. His living day by day in dazzling splendor marks him as a show-off, a strutting peacock. He wanted everybody to know that he was rich. He was in love...with himself. That he was utterly selfish becomes clear as the parable moves along.” [New Testament Commentary, Baker]

(22) The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried...

What do you suppose the funeral services were like for these two men? We can accurately guess: The Rich Man had a real “send-off.” Probably an elaborate shrine and a feast attended by his heirs (vying for his estate) and the typical socialites seen at such events in order to make self-serving contacts.

(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.’”

And Lazarus' service? Was there one at all? He must have had no family or even friends. No money. There was no benefit to anyone to know Lazarus. His obit didn't even make the paper. It was the pauper's field for his grave.

But...make very, very careful note. *Everything changed the moment death came.* Lazarus, as it turned out, had the best party heaven could give – angels attended! The Rich Man? No notice given him at all except the pronouncement to cast him into Hades. The last shall be first, and the first, last.

Question: What kind of memorial service will take place when you die? Many wealthy, famous, popular people in this world who die are given no notice in heaven at all. You might be thinking of the earthly funeral service put on in your honor – but that really doesn't matter at all, does it? The question is, what will heaven's response to your death be?

“The fact that Lazarus was by the angels carried to Abraham's bosom certainly proves that he had been true to his name (Eliezer, God is my Help). While on earth he had placed his trust in God as his Helper, and now God had ordered the angels to take his soul to Paradise. He who had yearned to receive crumbs and scraps is now reclining at heaven's table, where a banquet is being held. Lazarus enjoyed special favor at Abraham's side.” [Ibid, Hendriksen]

With the help of John Bunyan in his sermon on this same Scripture (entitled, Sighs From Hell), we have had our attention particularly called to this:

(Luke 19:23) and in Hades, being in torment, **he lifted up his eyes** and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

What did the Rich Man *see that he should have seen while he was still living in the world?* He saw:

1. That he had wasted his life living to himself in rebellion

against God and that the Lord had given him many, many opportunities and warnings and blessings to which he chose to turn a blind eye and deaf ear.

2. He saw that it was now too late. Too late. His eternal destiny was sealed. Like the 5 foolish virgins, the door was now shut to him forever.

And he saw two more things at least that we will carefully consider this morning:

3. He saw that hell was real
4. And he saw that hell was *forever*.

Hell is Real

We are beginning to study John Bunyan and will be reading through his *Pilgrim's Progress* in the first hour on Sundays this fall. Joel Beeke and Paul Smalley have written a new book entitled *John Bunyan and the Grace of Fearing God*. As we think carefully of this subject of hell and judgment, we must realize that the Apostle's

LUKE 16:19-31 (PT 3)

words to the Hebrews are true truth:

Heb 12:28-29 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, (29) for our God is a consuming fire.

Listen to Beeke and Smalley on this:

Martin Luther's commentary on Galatians, so helpful to Bunyan in his spiritual struggles, said, "We must trust and glory in God alone. He only is to be loved, he only is to be feared and honored."

The Genevan Reformer John Calvin (1509–1564) said that "piety" or godliness is "that reverence joined with love of God which the knowledge of his benefits induces"; the first thing our knowledge of God should teach us is "fear and reverence."

Like the Reformers and Puritans, Bunyan saw fear as an essential element of true godliness. Without

“reverence and godly fear,” we cannot “serve God acceptably” (Heb. 12:28).¹⁵

God’s presence moves people with holy dread, even when He comes with the comforting and joyous news of mercy and salvation. To illustrate this, Bunyan reminded his readers of Jacob’s dream of a ladder that reached from heaven to earth. God spoke to Jacob, not in wrath and fury, but “in the most sweet and gracious manner,” giving him several promises of good.

How did Jacob respond? He said, “Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven” (Gen. 28:16–17).

Beeke, Joel R.; Smalley, Paul M.. John Bunyan and the Grace of Fearing God (p. 35 & 40). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

The fear of the Lord is most certainly a *gift of God...a grace of*

God. Without it, the sinner will never come to Christ.

And this is what the Lord works to effect in us as we hear Him tell about the fate of this wicked Rich Man.

The Rich Man *lifted up his eyes in Hades*, and what did he see? He saw *that hell is real*. He had lived as if it did not, or at least that there was no way that he, “a child of Abraham” as he fancied himself, could every end up there. He was wrong. And now here he was and it was too late.

“The departed ones are not asleep but fully awake; some are saved, and others are suffering....Once a person has died, his condition, whether blessed or doomed, is fixed forever. There is no such thing as a second chance. Opportunities to live for the Lord to the glory of God must be seized now.” [Hendriksen]

Heb 9:27 And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,

Hell is real. Most people end up there. Few are saved. As we read Pilgrim's Progress, never forget that Bunyan is telling us that few are saved – only Christian, Faithful, and Hopeful – out of all the characters we meet in his dream – end up in the Celestial City. In part 2 we will find the same thing.

Hell is real. The hell that people now laugh at, curse with, boast about seeing their friends in...is a fiction. Satan and his pitchfork and fire – all a lie. The real hell is existence completely away from the blessing, and thus the light and glory and gifts of God...a torment unimaginable and likened by Scripture to...well, listen to Bunyan on this:

The names. It is called a never-dying worm (Mark 9). It is called an oven fire, hot (Mal 4:1). It is called a furnace, a fiery-furnace (Matt 13). It is called the bottomless pit, the unquenchable fire, fire and brimstone, hell fire, the lake of fire, devouring fire, everlasting fire, eternal fire, a stream of fire (Rev 21).

LUKE 16:19-31 (PT 3)

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

(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.'

Rev 20:14-15 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.

Hell is real. It is not some fanciful medieval fiction designed to coax the ignorant into paying money to get their loved ones out of the flame. That is a lie invented by Rome. Hell is worse. The hell that Jesus warns us about over and over and over in His Word is worse.

Mar 9:43-48 And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled

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than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. (45) And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. (47) And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, (48) ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’

To deny the reality of hell is to reject the Lord Jesus Christ and claim He is a liar and deceiver. It is to reject the entire Bible, and the hottest fires of hell are reserved for just such people – people who knew, people who have the Bible, people who play at being a Christian.

The fear of the Lord, the fear of hell...is indeed a grace of God meant to drive sinners to plead with Christ, *God, be merciful to me, a sinner.*

I want to put this question to all of us right now – *do you believe this?*

Do YOU believe this? Do you believe that you came into this world a sinner, deserving of hell, and that unless Christ’s righteousness is credited to you and your sin to Him, unless you are born again – you will end in hell? Because if you don’t believe this, if you insist that hell is for the other guy but that surely you are someone who has a get out of hell free card – then there is no hope for you.

NOW is the day of salvation. TODAY if you hear His voice, stop hardening your heart and plead with Christ to save you. While it is today, because as we are going to see right now, *tomorrow is too late. Too late, forever.*

The Rich Man knew. He had Moses and the Prophets to warn him:

Isa 66:24 “And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”

But just think what YOU have:

Heb 2:1-3 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,

NOTE: Hell is a place of fire. Isa 33:14; 66:24; Matt 3:12; 5:22; 13:40, 42, 50; 18:8,9; 25:41; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 3:17; Jude 7; Rev 14:10; 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8.

Hell is Real, and Hell is Forever

The false doctrine of Rome – that wicked heresy called *Purgatory* where the faithful go to be purged of their remaining sin in the fires of that place – is a lie. And more, it is a lie that is a million times, an infinite times *less terrible than hell*. Why? Because it is finite in

time. It has an end. It may be that a person has to be there 10,000 years before their unrighteousness is burned away, but there is an end point.

The real hell which Jesus warns us about repeatedly, *has no end*. The worm never dies. The torment is forever and ever. The fire is *unquenchable*. And we see this eternity fixed right here in the case of the Rich Man-

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.'

Again, in this condition thou must be for ever, and that is as sad as all the rest. For if a man were to have all his sins laid to his charge, and communion with the devils, and as much wrath as the great God of heaven can inflict unto him; *I say, if it were but for a time, even ten thousand years, and so end, there would be ground of comfort, and hopes of deliverance;*

but here is thy misery, this is thy state for ever, here thou must be for ever: when thou lookest about thee, and seest what an innumerable company of howling devils thou art amongst, thou shalt think this again, this is my portion for ever. When thou hast been in hell so many thousand years as there are stars in the firmament, or drops in the sea, or sands on the sea-shore, yet thou hast to lie there for ever. O this one word EVER, how will it torment thy soul!

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

You, in this present earthly life, have never for one second lived entirely away from God. No one in this life, no matter how miserable their daily life may be, is entirely in a place that is devoid of God and of the gifts of God.

But those in hell, like the Rich Man, have been cast out and away entirely. Listen to Jesus tell it:

LUKE 16:19-31 (PT 3)

Mat 22:11-14 “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.’ (14) For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Outer darkness. Why is that such a terror? People are afraid of the dark very often, but this outer darkness results in “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Well, think back to Genesis 1-

Gen 1:1-3 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (2) The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (3) And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was

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light.

And this –

Joh 1:4-5 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. (5) The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

In other words, the outer darkness is that which is out of the presence of God. A place and state where not a ray of God's light, not a single beam of Christ's light and life shines, where there is no good thing because the God who gives good things is not there.

What will that be? What will THEY be who are there? No good thing in them. No good thing around them. We say again, *no person in this present life has existed for even a second without some benefit of the presence of God.*

But in this outer darkness Jesus warns us of, in hell, in hell that is eternal, this is precisely what the Rich Man and the rest will experience. They will be given

exactly what they wanted all their lives – *no God, and thus, no Good.* It is no wonder that Jesus uses such powerfully terrible images – like eternal fire – to describe its torments.

Hell is real. And Hell is eternal. Forever and ever and ever.

In Pilgrim's Progress you will meet a man called Ignorant. You can't tell him anything. No matter to him that he did not enter the Way in the only right entrance. Yet here is his end, just as he comes up to the Celestial City just certain that the King would greet him:

Whence came you, and what would you have? He answered, I have eat and drank in the presence of the King, and he has taught in our streets.

Then they asked him for his certificate, that they might go in and show it to the King; so he fumbled in his bosom for one, and found none. Then said they, Have you none? But the man answered never a word.

So they told the King, but he would not come down to see him, but commanded the two Shining Ones that conducted Christian and Hopeful to the City, to go out and take Ignorance, and bind him hand and foot, and have him away. Then they took him up, and carried him through the air to the door that I saw in the side of the hill, and put him in there. Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction.

Bunyan, John. *The Pilgrim's Progress - Unabridged With Original Illustrations*.
www.graceflow.org. Kindle Edition.

You can stay in the City of Destruction, never even claiming to be a Christian, or you can be a great pretender like Ignorant and spend your life disguised as one of Christ's people and by that means arrive right at the very entrance to heaven. Either way, both end in hell.

Hell is real. Hell is eternal. Do NOT deceive yourself or be deceived. If you perish without Christ, you will spend eternity without Christ – weeping and wailing and gnashing your teeth, forever and ever and ever.

While it is still today, hear His voice. Stop hardening your heart, bow before Christ and plead, “be merciful to me, a sinner.”