# Where will you spend eternity

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[0:00] word that we read in Luke chapter 16 and to the parable that Jesus told the parable that we know as the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

I don't know if you have the habit of reading car stickers. It's very tempting, although very often it would be better that we didn't read them.
But just during the week there, I was drawn up on the bridge along there waiting for the lights to change and the car immediately in front of me had a sticker on the back window, very modestly written out, and I read it and it said this, Please consider, where will you spend eternity?
I suppose we're living in an age when many people wouldn't even know what it meant. Where will you spend eternity? But I imagine that most of us, if not all of us here this morning, do know what it means.
It was a good thought to have while waiting for the lights to change. It's a very liberating thought for the Christian believer to consider spending eternity in heaven.
[1:40] It's a thought that has much power to encourage us, whatever difficulties we may be going through, to persevere in trusting in our Lord Jesus Christ.

I don't know what feelings it gives to any who are here this morning who are not sincere believers, who are not born again.
I can't really remember if it's a long time ago since I was unconverted. I don't quite know how you will feel when you hear these words, when you hear that question, where will you spend eternity? But it's a good question. And I think the parable that's in front of us this morning is a proof to us that Jesus wants us to think about this question.
Where will you spend eternity? Because this parable is mostly about eternity. Much more of the parable is to do with what happened to these two men after death, when they moved into eternity.
[3:05] It's only the first few verses that have to do with what they were like in this world before death. The bulk of the parable is taken up with their experiences in eternity.

And Jesus wanted those who were listening to him to think about that. That's surely part of the parable and part of its message.
Although we must fix it as we go along more securely in the context. But certainly Jesus is saying to us through this story, and he was saying to us listeners, and he was saying especially to the Pharisees, who were not prepared for death and for eternity.
We know from verses 14 and 15 that it was to them especially he was speaking, and the Pharisees also, who were cavities, who loved money. And so it's not by chance that the parable speaks about a rich man.
The Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things and they derided him. And he said to them, a few introductory remarks, and then the parable about eternity.
[4:45] And of course the parable is about two men. Two men in eternity. A man in hell and a man in heaven.

And that's what I think we're encouraged to consider through this parable this morning.
Two things. Two people. A man in hell and a man in heaven. First of all, there's this man in hell. What are we to learn? What would Jesus have us learn through this man? Well, I think there are three things that the parable clearly teaches about this man in hell.
First of all, he was a mortal man. In that way, he was like every one of us here this morning.
[6:09] We are all mortal. And we have been reminded so forcefully this week already that it will be true of us as it is now true of those who have gone.

Unless Christ comes the second time sooner than that, we also will die and be buried. that's what happened to this man.

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That's the way that Jesus describes his end to convince his audience of how relevant it was to them. There they were pontificating, the Pharisees especially, about the way that life should be lived.
They were manipulating God's law to suit themselves as if all that was important was how they got on before God or appeared to get on in this world.
And Jesus says there was this rich man and he died and was buried. I think the first thing that Jesus is doing in this parable is bringing to us the reality of eternity.
[7:40] It's just a breath away. One moment of person is in this world. then there's a last gasp and they're in the next world.

And the parable makes clear that immediately they are either in hell or in heaven. We need to concentrate on hell in these days.
I think it is more than likely that there is no one here this morning that believes in heaven. That it may be that there are people here this morning who don't really believe in hell and who certainly don't believe that with just a breath they could find themselves there that hell is real not because I say it not because it's part of the standards of the free church but because Jesus Christ the eternal son of God sees it he tells us that this man died and was buried and in hell he lifted up his voice life then in a moment death and burial and hell that's how real it is and please be assured that it's Jesus who sees it the loving saviour the Lord Jesus Christ says again and again not just in a parable if it was just in a parable perhaps people would say it was just a story it was just a picture but it's not just in parables very often in his clear teaching he says after his coming after the judgment there will be that final banishment either to heaven or to hell and indeed what he tells us about hell in this parable fits in with the rest of the teaching that he gives and teaching that is given throughout scripture God says there is hell it's a place of torment it's a place of suffering and we're told at verse 23 here about this rich man and in hell he lift up his eyes being in torments involved already involved in the eternal suffering of the punishment of hell that's the way that
Jesus describes it in Matthew 25 at verse 46 when he's talking about those who have not met favorably with his judgment at the end of the age he says these shall go away into everlasting punishment everlasting punishment punishment living out the suffering of God against sin exactly how it will be I do not know the Bible describes it as the lake of fire the Bible also describes it as outer darkness now to our minds darkness and fire don't easily fit together
[12:08] I suppose it will be different from what anything that we can clearly imagine but it will be the torment of everlasting punishment it will be you see in an eternal scale what Christ suffered for his people when he died on the cross and cried out my God my God why have you forsaken me will be a place of torment it will be a place from where heaven can be seen it seems is this a picture or is it not the rich man sees

Lazarus in heaven a pharaoh I think we are to expect that it will be a place you see of eternal regret no man you see will be in heaven but it will be his own fault he will be judged according to what he has known and even the heathen in the jungle made in the image of God has been given sufficient light by his creation that ought to enable him to cry out to the God who has created him for mercy but he does not but how greater the torment of anyone here this morning who ends up in hell we are not just given the light of the heathen the light of creation but we every one of us here this morning have been given the light of the gospel we have been given the light of the knowledge of Jesus Christ that we have rather followed the blinding path of the evil one that's your situation if you are unconverted this morning you are prepared to follow the blinding control of the evil one and if you will not be saved and if you are cast into a lost eternity there will be the regret of seeing afar off what might have been but you would not because Christ said to every one of you and you may remember it throughout all eternity whosoever will let him come unto me it will be a place of eternal security we usually use that phraseology to speak about heaven and what blessing it is for the people of
God to think of heaven as a place of eternal security but of course Jesus tells us in the parable that hell also is a place of eternal security once a person is there they can't leave it they can't leave it and then there's something even more solemn about hell that I would like every one of you especially if you're unconverted this morning especially if you're still not a sincere follower of Jesus as your Lord and Saviour I would like you to remember this that hell is a place where people accept the need of repentance that's what the rich man said about his brother at verse 30 are his brothers no father

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Abram but if one went to them from the dead they will repent he recognized the need of repentance to escape from hell do you think people are spiritually improved when they go to hell do you do you think they know things then that they didn't know now and that they can put it to better spiritual advantage knowledge I think not I think the Bible gives us no evidence that that is the case although the parable might seem to suggest it but the parable is telling us this that there was the knowledge with the rich man already through Moses and the prophets through the scriptures that repentance is required

[18:14] I doubt if there is anyone here this morning even to the very youngest child who doesn't understand that to escape hell you need to repent the responsibility is yours God says repent God has given you the knowledge to know that you must repent that your life must change and that you must turn from living your life your own way to living your life under the authority and the control of Jesus Christ that same God in his love and in his mercy through the delivering up of his own son the Lord Jesus Christ through all the promises of grace for sinners has made it clear that there is power and grace and forgiveness given to all who will repent so that when they look back on it they will see that they repented not in their own strength but in

God's strength you cannot say this morning I would repent but I can't until God does something that's not the way you can repent in God's strength if you will repent because God promises repent and you will be saved so if you land in hell you have no one to blame but yourself a mortal man in hell a wealthy man in hell that's the next thing that the parable teaches about this man this man in hell he was wealthy now we might think oh does that mean that all wealthy people go to hell and that if you're not wealthy you won't go to hell well

I think we all understand that that's a ridiculous position to take and it's ridiculous because it doesn't fit in with what the scriptures see but it is saying this you may be wealthy and end up in hell and what good will your wealth be then listen Jesus obviously uses the example of a wealthy man here because this was relating to the Pharisees to whom he was speaking who loved their wealth and who were covetous of money and who were looking for the blessings and the comfort of this world to really satisfy them despite all their pretense of religiosity and so we have to fit it in with that connection and we have to see that no matter what good things we may have in this world things that we may acknowledge are by the blessing of God we may still land in hell you see Jesus say so clearly except a man be born again he cannot even see the kingdom of God we could put that another way and say on the basis of the fact that it's not the kingdom of God it's the kingdom of the evil one there are only the two kingdoms described in the Bible we could therefore say except a man be born again he will land up in hell but yet people will imagine that God is blessing them in so many ways and so surely it will be alright for them at the end of the day but they have no real interest in being born again they have no real interest in showing a clear spiritual moral change in their lives that can only be put down to the power of the Holy Spirit working within them they don't want to have track with that but they want to say and perhaps there are some such people here this morning they want to tell us how much God is blessing them they are so thankful to God for their health and their strength they are so thankful to God that they can get to church on a Sunday morning but they are not quite well enough to come on a Sunday evening and they can tell about all sorts of other things that God is doing for them but if you ask them are you born again if you ask them do you know Jesus as your Savior and your Lord do you love him are you following him every day are you finding that by his grace you are being enabled to resist sin and to repent from it and to become more like Jesus then the eyes go down and there is embarrassment all round here was a wealthy man and God is the giver of every good and perfect gift but he was in hell whatever outward blessings we may be given from God in this world there is one thing that is needful the thing that Mary of Bethany found that she would sit at the feet of Jesus and that he would be Lord and God

of every area of her life one thing needful have you got it that's what the parable was about because the Pharisees you see imagined that they would land up in heaven because they had such an interest in the law of God but in the introductory verses here some of them not all that easy to understand Jesus is clearly saying but you're manipulating the law for your own advantage so that you can go on in your own sweet way and still at the heart of your life there is this love of money this love of the material this desire for comfort in this world that is eating up your soul and so you're just like this wealthy man who ended up in hell he was a mortal man he was a wealthy man and he was a religious man like his brothers

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I think the implication is very clear that he had Moses and the prophets he had the Bible that's what verse 29 says you see Abraham said to him Abraham speaking from heaven down to hell they have Moses and the prophets let them hear then they've got God's word and to have God's word is more than enough to escape hell and to get to heaven but it wasn't enough for this man he had it he had Moses and the prophets like his brothers but you see the word of God didn't pervade his life we are told just about one area of his life but one area is enough to show that he had a wrong relationship with God and his word when it came to the poor lying at his gate the dogs did more for Lazarus by licking his sores than this rich man with all his wealth did and that was the way with the Pharisees you see to whom Jesus was speaking they had the law but oh when it came to a marriage that was a little bit uncomfortable for them they could work out divorce laws that were contrary to God's word so that they didn't have to know any discomfort from the word of God oh we know of the Pharisees that they were regular church goers we know that they were full of talk about God's word and about God's law but they weren't living it out they were keeping everybody else right but they weren't right themselves and here's this man imagining that if something spectacular happened and this man went back from the dead to them then they would repay we have Moses and the prophets we have the entire word of God

[29:02] Old Testament and New Testament and are you still asking for something spectacular to happen are you still asking for a special verse from God are you still asking for a special wonderful feeling and for the rest of the time you just sit back and let's see if God will do his work in my life or not don't you see the heinousness of such sin when God has given us his word full of promises and full of commands that's the way of salvation it's the way of taking God at his word and taking him seriously it's the way of when God says that if we will trust in him and follow him and obey his commands and not trust in our own strength but trust in the strength of Christ alone he will do it and our lives will be changed and Christ will have all the glory but if we will not do it and if we will say oh no I must have something extra

I must have this or I must have that so that I can be sure and if we delay and if you delay then you may find yourself in hell a man in hell but think of a man in heaven that also is in the parable think of a man in heaven you see where will you spend eternity there are two places and the Bible teaches clearly of both think of a man in heaven not three things to think of this time just two and very briefly it was a poor man it was a poor man in other words he seemed to have nothing he seemed to have no resources and the world seemed to be against him but he was in heaven he was in heaven he's there you see as an example of God's pattern the man who is in heaven always comes to an end of his own resources you see he's there as the foil for the rich man and the Bible makes so clear that it's not that the man was rich that kept him out of heaven it was that he trusted in his riches and his riches closed his heart because he had a wrong attitude he was sufficient in himself and so the poor man is there as the foil some folks are leaving the gallery so it will need somebody to help them to get out it's the foil to the rich man the poor man is the foil to him it might be someone who has great political power there's nothing wrong with political power that if it becomes the source of trust the source of confidence there's no salvation in it it might be the eloquent preacher who proves his trust in his preaching ability it might be the respected office bearer in the church who puts his trust in the fact that people have shown him respect nothing that we may gain for ourselves in this world is worthy of our trust and our confidence except Christ except the grace of God that is to be found in Christ that's what the poor man stands for he had nothing of this world he had nothing to hope for in this world but he had heaven to hope for he was a Christian he was born again because Jesus tells us that except you're born again you can't get to heaven you can't even see the kingdom of God where is your trust? are you happy to be without whatever God wants you to be without because all you want is Christ and his grace and his power was a poor man and he was a man called Lazarus it would seem that that must be significant this is the only place where Jesus uses a personal name to talk about any of his characters in his parables it would seem that the name is significant and the name means God helped me God helped me that's the picture of a man in heaven or a woman in heaven it's a picture of a man or a woman with a testimony

God helped me now we've seen already that it doesn't mean God helped me with my health God helped me with my job God helped me to have comfortable surroundings in this world God helped me with my family Lazarus it seems couldn't see any of that no it's got to do with God helping me with my sinful soul God helping me with the one thing that would keep me out of heaven my sin and my uncleanness God helped me God sent his son to die for me God gave me every step of the way

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the grace and the power and the comfort and the strength that he promised to those who would go his way and who would trust in him and would do his will
God helped me with all of that that's why I'm in heaven how is it with you remember the car sticker consider this where will you spend eternity amen psalm 37 at verse 37 mark thou the perfect and behold the man of uprightness because that surely of this man the man of uprightness the man of uprightness the tune appropriately is rest psalm 37 at verse 37 and we stand to sing mark thou the perfect mark thou the perfect and behold the man of uprightness of uprightness because that surely of this man of this man the latter end is peace but those men that transgressors are shall be destroyed together the latter end the man of wicked of wicked men shall be cut of forever but the salvation of the just is from the Lord above he in the time of their distress their state and strength doth prove the Lord shall help and them deliver he shall them free and save from wicked men because in him their confidence they have confidence they have now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit remain with us now and always
[40:43] Amen Amen

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