

The rich man and Lazarus

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[0 : 0 0] And let us turn to the Gospel according to Luke chapter 16. The Gospel according to Luke chapter 16 at verse 19. There was a certain rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. There was a certain beggar named Lazarus who was laid at his gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores, and it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried, and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.

But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things. But now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, Father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house. For I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.

And he said, Nay, Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto them, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. Now we have been looking at this parable given by our Lord, which is a grim reminder to us of what happens when we exclude God from our lives.

Now last Sabbath morning we looked at these two men that Jesus speaks of, the rich man on the one hand, Lazarus on the other. And we consider together the contrast that we see in these men in life.

The one is rich, the other is poor. The one is enjoying life in this world, the other is in misery, he is in pain. And then we also consider together the contrast that we find in them at death.

[3 : 0 3] You see, the rich man no doubt had many to attend him. On his deathbed, the poor man had no one except the dogs who came and licked his sores. And then of course at death too, there would be all the funeral arrangements. And the rich man would have a very expensive funeral while the poor man was probably thrown into a pauper's grave. But we also notice this, that at death, instead of the poor man being alone, he had the angels to convoy him into the presence of Almighty God.

Whereas with regard to the rich man who had everyone around his dying bed, when eventually he had to walk through the valley of the shadow, he went alone.

No one could go with him. Once he turned his back on this world, and once he began his march to eternity, he began it alone.

And just as there was a contrast in their lives and a contrast in their death, so our Lord brings to our attention a contrast with regard to their eternal destiny.

And that's the subject that I want us to be concerned about this morning. A contrast in eternity. It came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.

[4 : 42] The rich man also died and was buried, and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

Now there was a question that was put to Job long, long years ago. And that question has been fully answered by Christ.

The question that was put by Job was this. Man dieth, and wasteth away. Yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?

That's the question, you see, that urges itself upon your mind and mine. A man dies. And how often we have seen men die.

How often we have had to attend these funerals. But after death, what? Isn't that what comes to your mind and mine?

[5 : 42] What's happened to him? What's happened to her? I always remember, I think I've told you about this, the poor woman that said to me one day after her brother had been buried, I wonder, where is Kenny?

Or it would have been good to have said to that woman, well, you don't have to worry about Kenny, Kenny is in glory. But you see, when the evidence is there that Kenny is not in glory, what can you say to a woman like that?

You see, the question, where is a man after he dies, is answered for us here by Christ. After he dies, he is either enjoying the bliss of heaven or the indescribable misery of hell.

Now there is no suggestion whatever of the soul being asleep until the day of the resurrection. This is the great doctrine of the Jehovah Witnesses. That the soul, once it dies, goes to sleep.

The idea of the soul sleeping has no foundation in the teaching of God. It's the same teaching that you find in the Seventh-day Adventists.

[7 : 12] Jesus tells us that immediately they died, they were either in the bliss of heaven or in the terrifying misery and war of hell. As quick as that.

Now we have in the first place here the blessedness of heaven. Lazarus was carried into Abraham's bosom.

You see, the highest hope of the pious Hebrew under the old economy was that he would be welcomed into the eternal world by Abraham.

Abraham. The Jew always thought of Abraham, this mighty man of God. And as the Jew thought of Abraham, he saw Abraham in heaven.

And he saw Abraham with his arms outstretched like a great father. And just as a child runs into the arms of his father and as the father picks up the child and grasps him to his bosom, so this was the idea of heaven to the Jew.

[8 : 19] That Abraham, their mighty father, would gather them into his bosom. And that would be security. That would be protection.

That would be love. You see, God's covenant with Abraham was this, that Abraham's seed would be as numerous as the stars in the sky or the sand by the seashore.

And as the head of his seed, Abraham was in the place of security. As the father of the faithful, he would be there to welcome his children.

Abraham. And so for the ancient Jew, the bosom of Abraham meant the paradise of God. It meant heaven.

It was a figurative expression, denoting the place of happiness, the place of well-being, the place of security.

[9 : 22] And you see, here was Lazarus, who was poor before this. Now he was exceeding rich. He was in the arms, in the bosom of Abraham, Jesus tells us.

All his diseases had vanished. Not a scar on his body.

Not a separating sore on his body for the dogs to lick. His body was entirely healed. Not only that, but he was in the place of comfort.

Never again would you find Lazarus begging for bread. Never again would this man, Lazarus, ever experience going through death.

He was in the place of heavenly comfort, in the bosom of Abraham. Now of course we no longer think of that place as Abraham's bosom.

[10 : 42] We think of it as the place where Christ is. The place which Christ has purchased for his people by his sacrificial death.

The place of which Jesus says, in my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself. But where I am there, ye may be also. That's heaven.

Where Christ is. Where he is preparing mansions for his people. It's the place which Paul longed to be, or where Paul longed for, when he said, to be with Christ is far better.

It's the place that we read of in the book of Revelation, where they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

[11 : 55] For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters. And God shall wipe away all tears from off their eyes.

That's the place. Are you going there? Have you come to Christ as your Savior?

Have you come to the cross? That's the turning point. As you're walking through life, you come to the cross and it points that way to heaven. Have you taken that way?

Have you taken that way? If you have taken that road, then my friend, what comfort awaits you.

Your body which may be ravaged by disease before you come to the end of your lifespan, all your diseases will disappear. The old, broken, emaciated frame will be rejuvenated, renewed.

[13 : 11] You know, it tells us that heaven is the place where there is never an old man and where there is never an infant child. Do you know that? An old man is expressive of deterioration.

A young child is expressive of immaturity. But in heaven, there is no deterioration or immaturity. In fact, some think that in heaven, people will be at the age that Christ was at when he left this world.

Be that as it may. It's a place where you are made new completely.

But on the other hand, we have here the indescribable misery of hell. Now, I suppose that if some people were to come into this church this morning, they would say, what an old-fashioned church, what an old-fashioned minister.

Well, we can only be as old-fashioned or as new-fashioned as the Bible makes us. We can't go beyond the Word of God. We can't take from it. It's there.

[14 : 25] And all the folks, you see, who think they are in the new fashion today will discover that they are in the old-fashioned tomorrow because this is the new fashion, the Word of God. Keep abreast of it.

Keep up with it. If you keep up with the Bible, I tell you this, you'll keep up with God. But if you don't keep up with the Bible, you'll keep up with your fellow men. And they're a poor lot to keep up with.

Aren't they? The rich man died and was buried. And in hell, he lift up his eyes, being in torment.

Now, you see, there can be no dubiety about what Christ has to say of eternal punishment. It's true.

It's essentially frightening. When people say that this is only figurative language, the implication is that the reality is less terrifying than the description.

[15 : 34] But the truth of the matter is this, that if this is only the description, how awful must the real thing be?

Hell, or Hades, as it is sometimes called, is the place of departed spirits.

And in the sense in which Christ speaks of hell here, it's the unseen world, particularly the unseen world of punishment, the place of punishment.

Now, where is hell? Where is it? Well, it is far, far away from the bosom of Abraham.

And this is what Jesus makes these disciples of his and these Jews of his day understand. That there is a great yawning gulf fixed between the bosom of Abraham and this place of torment.

[16 : 40] A great gulf fixed. And it says, you see, and Jesus tells us here that the rich man lifted up his eyes in hell to Lazarus who was afar off.

You see the distance? Lazarus is afar off. And the eternal state in which these men were was irrevocably fixed.

A great gulf separated them. There could be no passing from the one to the other, from the other to the other, to the other. There could be no passing between one and another.

And after reading a passage like this, we see, don't we, how ludicrous it is to pray for the dead. You know, it staggers me sometimes.

I've come across this in the free church where some free church people, and I'm not saying that this is common. Thank God it's not. But you do sometimes find perhaps a free church person who's not just abreast of the Bible as he ought to be, and he'll say, can we not pray for so-and-so who's died?

[18 : 01] No, my friend, you cannot pray for any dead person. Once death has come, the destiny has been fixed.

You cannot pray for the dead. Hell is the place of fixed separation from God and blessedness.

It is the place of endless torment. Listen to this rich man. Send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue for I am tormented in this flame.

Maybe by implication we can almost hear the rich man saying, do you not remember the times that Lazarus ate of my crumbs that fell from my table? He got a crumb.

Well, now that Lazarus is up there, send him and let him dip his finger in water. Just a dip of the finger in water and cool my tongue for I am tormented in this flame.

[19 : 15] elsewhere, elsewhere, Jesus speaks about the place of outer darkness. He speaks about the place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

Elsewhere, Jesus speaks about the place of weeping, of wailing, of gnashing of teeth. Now, I am not telling you all these things because they are in my mind just to frighten people as it were out of their indifference into heaven not at all.

No, this is what the Bible has to say to us and in the book of Revelation we are told that it's the place that has been reserved for the fearful, the unbelieving, the abominable, the murderers, the warmongers, the sorcerers, the idolaters, the liars, where they will find their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone which is the second death.

That's what we read this morning. I think it's John Milton who puts it like this, the famous English Puritan poet. Through all that dungeon of unfading fire I saw most miserable beings walk dying perpetually yet never dead.

and there were groans that ended not and sighs that always sighed and tears that ever wept and ever fell but not in mercy sight.

[21 : 08] We must heed these solemn warnings of our Lord about hell. We mustn't dismiss what he has to say as something that mustn't be treated seriously.

Indeed we must remember what the apostle says in his letter to the Hebrews where he puts it like this it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Now as you and I leave a passage of scripture like this what may we take from these solemn words before us in the Bible. The first lesson that we must take with us and that is this that our attitude to God in this life determines forever our eternal destiny at death.

The rich man you see he lived for himself. The rich man refused to take God seriously. The place in his heart that should have been given to God was given to Mammon.

The purple the fine linen the carefree flamboyant life meant more to him than God and the tragedy is that he died a careless sinner a godless man and the eternal consequences for him were disastrous.

[22 : 44] Now Lazarus on the other hand in spite of his wretched and his miserable life he died full of faith. He received the riches of that inheritance reserved for those who are the heirs of salvation.

And the question that we must ask ourselves today and that is this is it worth enjoying for a few years the paltry things of this life to the exclusion of God?

The remaining part of this sermon is recorded on side two of the cassette. Please now turn over to side two. And the question that we must ask ourselves today and that is this, is it worth enjoying for a few years the paltry things of this life to the exclusion of God?

Is it worth it? You might live for a number of years. I don't know how many years we will live. I can't tell you how long I live myself.

Don't know what another day may bring forth for me. But one day your place in this church will be empty forever. just as one day I will no longer be here in this pulpit.

[24 : 13] Now we've only got a short time till then. And I ask you, is it worth enjoying a few paltry years at the expense of your soul?

What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world? And in the end he loses soul. We ought to take, for example, Moses in connection with this.

It tells us with regard to Moses that he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ's greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect and to the recompense of reward.

So let us remember then, and this is the first lesson that we ought to take from this Bible passage, our attitude to God in this life will determine forever our eternal destiny at death.

And here is another lesson that I leave with you. what qualifies for eternal life is revealed to us by God in his word, and in that word alone.

[25 : 38] You see, in his plea to Abraham to send Lazarus, the rich man said that he had five brothers, and he wanted Lazarus to warn these five brothers against coming to this dreadful place that he was in himself.

Now the implication is that he himself had not had sufficient warning. He seems to be saying if only I had had the warning, if only someone had come to me and spoken to me, I wouldn't be in this dreadful place.

And so he says to God, send Lazarus, or rather he speaks to Abraham, send Lazarus to warn my brothers. in case they come to this dreadful place.

But you see, this man had Moses, as Abraham tells him. He had the prophets. He had the whole of the Old Testament revelation at his disposal.

But you see, this man had refused to make use of it. others. And his plea now is that by some miraculous intervention, others would heed the warning.

[27 : 05] If only someone would come back from the dead, tell what it's like beyond death. And isn't that what some people are saying today?

Oh, if only someone would come back from the dead to tell us, then we would heed what they have to say about it. But then you see, there was another Lazarus who died.

And although it says that many believed on Jesus because of Lazarus, yet in comparison they would be few. there was the resurrection of Christ himself from the dead.

But instead of this being accompanied by belief in Christ, people have rejected him. Now what we must bear in mind, and that is this, that God has spoken to us fully and completely in his word.

And we must heed what God is saying to us. How great, my friend, is our responsibility today? Because we don't just have Moses and the prophets, but we have the whole canon embodying the whole of scripture.

[28 : 28] From Genesis to Revelation, we have it all. And what is Jesus saying to us today? Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.

And this is the tragedy, you see, that people are not searching the scriptures. It's the tragedy among our free church people that they are not searching the scriptures.

You know, free church people today, they'll tell you all about what's in the newspapers. newspapers. They're up to date with what has happened yesterday in the world.

They can tell you all about the television personalities. They sit there and they watch the television screen, night after night, day after day.

They know everything about these things. Search the Bible. Bible. Bible. Bible. Bible. Bible. Bible. Bible. Bible. Bible. Bible. Bible. Bible. Bible. Bible. Bible.

[29 : 38] How much searching of the Bible is there among free church people today? What qualifies for eternal life is revealed to us by God and his word.

Supposing I were to say to you, you know, there is treasure to be found up there. in the hills above Inverness. And supposing I were to say to you, I have a map, you know, that tells you where about you'll find that treasure.

You would come to me and say, show me. Let me have a look. And I dare say you would take time to go up, take a spade with you, a pick, and you would go about the hills there searching for this.

You say, you know, it would be good to get some of that gold that's up there. I could buy a new house. The house that I'm in that's so insufficient, I could buy a new house.

I could buy new furniture. I could treat myself to a new car. I could have everything new. tell me where it's to be found.

[31 : 02] Tell me how I can make myself rich. You would search, wouldn't you? But you see, here is God and he is offering you much more than earthly riches.

God who is offering to you and to me eternal life. and yet here is the way we find it.

Here is the way to discover it. And we are not bothering about it, are we? Search the scriptures. Do you remember the story of Abner, that famous general of the Old Testament, who was one of the foremost soldiers of his day, who fought for King Saul, and who remained faithful to the family of Saul after Saul had died on the battlefield of Moab.

There came a time when Abner decided that he would transfer his loyalty from the unworthy household of Saul to David.

And so he came to David and he said to David, I'm going to come into your army. You can use me as you will. Now David rejoiced at this. Here was this outstanding soldier coming over to him, going to assist him in his army.

[32 : 41] But you see, David had another man in his army who was his general-in-chief. he was Joab. And Joab didn't like the idea of Abner coming in.

Would Abner usurp his place? Would Abner take over as the field commander of the army? Joab couldn't bear the thought. And so he made an arrangement to meet with Abner and poor Abner thought it was just to have a conference, two great generals going to meet with one another, going to speak about military things together.

And Abner came to Joab. And Joab told him to come up closer to him, that he wanted to speak to him, he wanted to say something to him, and Abner thought it was something private, and as he made his way towards Joab, Joab suddenly caught him and thrust him through with a dagger.

Abner died. And when David was told about this, David lamented, and his great cry was, died Abner as a fool dieth.

Oh Abner, he says, you weren't a fool. Your hands weren't bound nor were your feet tied. Couldn't you have fought for your life?

[34 : 06] Couldn't you have made a run for it when you saw this terrible man Joab coming towards you? Your death was so unnecessary. Why didn't you do something about it Abner?

Why don't you do something about it? Why go to hell? Why?

Why? always remember this story that Jesus told. He didn't tell it for nothing.

I've only tried to pass on the lessons. May God enable you to understand it and me myself.uffed Your ■ shared today I went into How I was of your