

Hell

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Date: 10 August 2008

[0:00] Luke chapter 16 from verse 19. I'm going to teach you about hell. Hell. Now for some it's a swear word and that's all I understand it to be. But it's really about a serious message. A serious message. This is not a fairy story. It's a real life story.

Or you could say a real death story. It's an eyewitness report about a poor man and a rich man. About real people. It's about real people this story. And about their position or their status in society. And status is often measured by how much people have. Whether someone is rich or poor. And one was called a rich man. And we see that there in verse 19 of Luke 16. It says, There was a certain rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. He was pampered. He had everything laid on. When he walked around, Mr. Rich you could call him, was treated with respect and as like he was royalty.

You could imagine there might have been a trumpet fanfare and a red carpet treatment for this man. He was a person who was in the who's who. His name was written about. And he was well known in the world. And yet his name's not given in the account. But he had everything that the world counts as valuable. He had everything money could buy. He was dressed in the finest clothes. He lived in luxury day after day. And he feasted at the table. And he had people waiting on him hand and foot.

[1:40] People would have thought that he was someone important. He had lots to brag about. He rubbed shoulders with all the important people. He was successful as the world would call it. He had fame and fortune. Friends in high places. He was living the good life.

People would say, people would say, the high life. The certain rich man. Clothed in all the fancy clothes and living in luxury every day. And then you see the second character in this story. It goes on to tell us in verse 20.

There was the rich man. There was the rich man. And there was the poor man. Verse 20. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus which lay at his gate full of sores. Lazarus.

Now, again, I want to emphasise tonight. Some people think this is just a mythical story. Some religious groups paint this as just kind of an illustration.

But it's a real life story. Because there's real names used. There's a name of a man here. And his name is Lazarus. He is the poor man. And poor by the world's standards.

[2:49] Here he was. What does it say? He was laid at the gate of the rich man. He didn't have anywhere to live. He was homeless. He was lying there full of sores. He was covered in sores. He lacked money. He lacked fame and fortune. He lacked probably work. And he lacked food.

He was covered with sores. What an awful state. Imagine it. Imagine seeing a man like that. Lying covered in sores. And it goes on in verse 21. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table.

Moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. Oh, wouldn't that be awful? So here he was. He was covered with sores. And he wanted to have something to eat.

And he was just craving. He was just craving for what? For the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. That's how desperate he was. And yet, of some it says in James 2 verse 5, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith?

So really, it doesn't matter how much you've got in the bank or in your wallet. God has chosen the poor in this world rich in faith. What do you think is more important? Being rich in this world or being rich in faith?

[4:06] Being rich in faith is so much more important, isn't it? I mean, it's always nice to have some tangible money to spend. But much more

important than any money to spend or earn or bank is to have the richness, that wealth of faith.

That richness of having faith in Christ. And here he was, this poor man. This poor man, you could picture him in your mind's eye. You might imagine how he might have looked. How do you think someone would look who is poor, who hadn't eaten for a long time?

He'd have looked like he was skin and bones, wouldn't he? He'd have looked like he was dressed in rags. He had no flesh belongings and he hung it for what? Have you been listening? He hung it for what?

The crumbs. He just wanted to have a few crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. That's how hungry he was, how desperate he was. And no one seemed to know him except a pack of dogs. What did the dogs do? They licked his sores. Yeah, wouldn't that be awful? What an awful state for this poor man. And our story is about these two characters.

[5:08] A rich man and a poor man. The real rich man in the story was actually Lazarus. The real rich man in this story was not the man who had all the money to spend, but the one who was rich in faith.

Because we see at the end result of this story that Lazarus must have been a believer in God. He must have been a man who had put his trust in the Lord and was saved.

Because we see that is what really counts in life. It doesn't matter whether we are materially rich or poor, but whether we are spiritually rich or poor.

That's what counts. That's what counts. What truly counts is our status before God. Our heart condition before him. Are we truly rich in faith?

Now that means that real richness, the real important thing of life is to know Christ. It's to trust him.

[6:12] It's to have faith. It's to put our trust in the Lord Jesus.

That's what counts. That's what matters. It doesn't matter all the other things as much as it's nice to have possessions and material things.

What counts is having faith. Having faith in God. Having faith in Christ. And so we see their state. Now I've lived in four states of Australia.

Four states. Real people are in one of two states. Two states. Two conditions. They're either dead or alive. And all of us here today are in one or the other states.

Now of course you're all physically here. All of you here tonight are physically alive. Alright. But I don't know whether all of you are spiritually alive yet.

Alright. Whether you put your trust in God. Whether you put your trust in the Saviour. That is how we know that we're spiritually alive.

[7:20] That we have new life. That we're born again. That if any man is in Christ, he's a new creature. Old things are passed away. Behold, all things have become new.

And it goes on in our story. Verse 22. 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. Death. Death is the great leveller. Someone has put it.

Because it doesn't matter what your status, so called in life is.

When death comes, we're all level pegging. We're all, as it says in the Bible, it says that naked came we into the world.

And the same way we're going to go out. We're not going to take a bag of stuff with us when we go. Alright. You can't pack a bag and take it with you to the beyond.

[8:20] There's nothing you can take with you beyond this mortal life. And some, when they die, some people build really fancy mausoleons.

Okay. It's like a little house. Like a little house with, what, the marble columns and beautiful decorations and lovely, ornate, fancy carvings and beautiful headstones.

And they might put the body in a beautiful oak casket. Lovely. They might polish it. And it might have gold handles. It might be a beautiful coffin that they might put the body in.

Maybe with solid, shining silver handles. Others might be buried in a cardboard box. Maybe not even in a box. You know, when you get buried at sea, when you get buried at sea, they just put you on, understand, on a little kind of slip way, a little piece of wood, and they just go like that, and the body slides into the sea.

And they bury the body at sea without anything around it. But one thing's for sure, at death, after death, everyone has to stand before the Maker.

[9:34] It says that as it is appointed unto man, once to die, Hebrews 9, 27, but after this, the judgment. So one thing's for sure, for every one of us, it is appointed that we're going to die.

It's going to happen, unless, of course, we go as the Lord comes and takes us at His coming.

Sometime after the moment we die, then there will be the judgment.

And everyone will stand empty-handed before the Maker. Now we see in our story here, the beggar died, Lazarus died, and the rich man died. What happened?

Who got the angel escort? Who got the special treatment? It was Lazarus. Lazarus was escorted by angels to heaven.

You can imagine, he was treated as somebody important, wasn't he? He was treated as somebody special. It's like, when you've ever seen, like maybe when the, we know it's the Olympics at the moment, when the sports heroes come back to Australia, what will they do?

[10:39] They'll probably have a ticker tape parade. They might drive them in Rolls Royces or fancy cars down the main streets. And everybody yells and screams and throws confetti or streamers and everything because they're making a great celebration about these people coming back and having done so well.

And yet, who was it that they made a fuss out of in heaven, so to speak? Who was it that got a fuss made out of him? It was Lazarus. He had the special treatment.

You can imagine, I'm just picturing it in the illustrative form, that he might have had a Rolls Royce chauffeur ride down that street. He might have had the police escort and the fanfare of trumpets.

Here comes Lazarus. He's arrived. Here comes Lazarus that have got the red carpet treatment for this new arrival to the heavenly realm.

And this person, Lazarus, was the one who was in the who's who. He had his name written and he was well known in this world. He had everything that this world counts as valuable.

[11:46] He had everything that Jesus' blood could buy. He was dressed in the finest clothes in this world. And he was now to live in eternity, in bliss and enjoyment.

He feasted at the table. He would have had angels waiting on him hand and foot. You could picture it here. People knew that here was someone important. Here was Lazarus.

One who had followed the Lord in his earthly life because he was treated as a member of royalty, as a member of the royal family, a child of the king.

And he rubbed shoulders with them. He was successful. He had true friends in high places. He had true blessings and he was truly living the good life, the high life.

Lazarus was somebody special in heaven. He was somebody special when he was welcomed by the Lord when he physically died. Someone wrote this on a tombstone, on a gravestone.

[12:54] And it was an old gravestone. It was more than 100 years old. And it says this. It says, Pause, stranger, when you pass me by. As you are now, so once was I.

As I am now, so you will be. So prepare for death and follow me. And then, an unknown passerby saw this tombstone and they wrote, they scratched something underneath that and they said, to follow you I'm not content until I know which way you went.

Okay? We don't know which way. There's two ways to go. There's two destinations. We know death is for sure. We will meet our maker. We want to know which way we're going.

To be with the Lord or to be away from the Lord. To be in his presence in heaven and his glory or to be in judgment and condemnation in hell.

There's real people walking around us who are going to go to that place. Okay? We're talking about real people. Okay? Secondly, we see there's real pain.

[14:04] There's real pain here. Hell is a place where there's real pain. It's no Hollywood film here. It's real. It's not make-believe. It says there of this place that people can exercise their senses.

They can exercise their senses. We read there in verse 23 the first sense that they can use. Listen now. Look at what it says there in verse 23. And in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torment and

seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom.

So what could he do? He could see. He could lift up his eyes and he could see. We see that the senses are overwhelmed as the sight.

There. What a sight he saw was the awful blackness. Okay? Another sense that people use is people in hell speak.

They shriek. They cry out. It says in verse 24 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.

[15:16] He had the sense of speaking. He cried out. He cried out for mercy. And he cried out for thirst. He had the sense of thirst of torment. real people are crying out.

Crying out. And in hell there will be such a regret of a wasted life of lost riches of the real riches that they are missing out of that relationship that they could have had.

So we see there is the sense of sight of speech and of sorrow. He had regret and remorse. He realised then his mistake his great mistake this man you could call him listen Mr. Rich you could call him he was filled with regret and remorse but it was too late for him.

In verse 25 it says Abraham said Son rememberest that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things and likewise Lazarus evil things but now he is comforted and thou art tormented.

So the rich man he had utter sorrow it was such a shameful thing and the memory the regret that he would have had the conscience the bitter worm of conscience that he would have had he would have remembered the opportunities maybe through life as he might have had the opportunity to respond to the gospel to receive the message of the people he might have turned away maybe people he heard who might have tried to witness and share the gospel with him but his opportunity was lost now friends some people wonder about hell whether it's something that's real whether God would do that but it says in Genesis 18 verse 25 shall not the judge of all the earth do right we know that God will do right he will be a righteous judge and some would think that God could not be so cruel but we know that God in his wisdom will do what is right he will do what is right he must be just because we know if there was a judge who was just letting people off when they were doing things wrong when they had a way of escape then that wouldn't be a fair judge if he was letting people off so heaven is a place a prepared place for prepared people and we see the real people in this account

[17:37] Lazarus and the rich man real people we see the real pain the man cried out in torment in regret in great loss and we see thirdly but this is a terrifying real place it's a real place hell is real to many it's just a joke or we know it's a common swear word you know I heard someone say it's hell fun well I want to tell you tonight hell is no fun okay some people use the word hell fun or it's hell good you know I know it's a common thing kids say these days crazy though it seems well there's nothing good or fun about hell alright hell is real and it's awful you don't want to go there you wouldn't want to go there what are some of the facts about hell we carry on with our account here we see firstly the separation in hell in verse 26 it says the Lord goes on in the story in the account he says and besides 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 then so there's a great gulf there's a great big chasm a gulf means a chasm it means there's a great big a great big gap a great big chasm a great big hollow space and there's no bridge across from one side to the other from heaven to hell once you're in hell there's no escape there's no fire exit in hell there's no exit door you can't escape from hell it's permanent and it's a permanent place of separation imagine imagine being separated from God and locked in a place full of the enemies of God you know we know that that would be something terrible there's no second chance there and people in hell know about prayer there's supplication there in verse 27 it said then he said this is the rich man to Lazarus

I pray thee therefore father that thou wouldst send him to my father's house there's prayer in hell but he wasn't praying right anyway but it's too late to pray when you're in hell it's too late ok and people in hell care about saving souls it goes on in verse 28 the rich man he says he's crying out that people would go to his father's house because he says in verse 28 for I have five brethren that he may testify unto them lest they also come into this place of torment so this lost man he cared about those that were doomed and destined to join him there he cared about witnessing about outreach about warning his family people in hell believe in hell but it's too late to believe in hell when you're already there you know it's too late to change your course of direction and turn around people in hell believe in the word of God it says in verse 29

Abraham saith unto him they had Moses and the prophets let them hear them people in hell believe in repentance it says in verse 30 and he said nay father Abraham but if one went unto them from the dead they will repent he saw that the great need for his brothers back on earth was that they would repent and verse 31 Abraham said unto him if they hear not Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead how sad they will not be persuaded and that's true of our world today we know especially when we're witnessing the vast bulk of humanity doesn't care about the message the vast majority of our population they don't care they won't be persuaded they won't listen they won't receive it they will not listen what a tragedy they will not be persuaded even though one rise from the dead now who rose from the dead the Lord Jesus did didn't he the Lord Jesus was dead buried and he rose again the third day according to the scriptures and yet they will still not receive his word do we really believe that real people suffer real pain in a real place called hell what is our status today what is your status today are you spiritually poor or spiritually rich that's what matters that's what counts that's what matters whether you know the saviour personally or not it doesn't matter whether you are affluent or wealthy or have got it made or lived the high life the good life so called that the world would make such a big deal about but whether you know Christ whether you know him whether you know him whether you're saved and what is your state are you spiritually dead or spiritually alive you're either one or the other now you're all physically alive here tonight but are you spiritually alive does Christ live in your heart by faith has your heart been renewed your mind been renewed have you had that heart washed of its sin and received his forgiveness and his cleansing do we care about those who are suffering real pain some of our friends and neighbours will one day experience that possibly not just for one day but for all eternity and because we care because we care about eternity because we care about the gospel truth about man's eternal destiny that's why we must declare it we must share it we mustn't hold back it's too important a truth to keep to ourselves can we sense for a moment just as we close the sights the sounds the senses the sorrow of that bitter place of hell the place of regret of remorse can we grasp the fact that hell is a real place and the endless separation there the separation from almighty god the supplication the prayers that are too late the pleas for salvation they've left it too long too late it's over there's no escape there's utter hopelessness there doesn't it motivate us to work while there is still time

I'll just share one closing story of a criminal in England it was the days when they still executed criminals for certain crimes and here was this man Charlie Peace was his name a criminal in England and on the day that he was being taken to the execution he got the chance to listen to a preacher he got the chance to listen to someone reading from the Bible and when he found out that he was reading about heaven and hell he looked at the preacher and he said sir if I believed what you and the church of God say and even if England were covered with broken glass from coast to coast I would walk over it on hands and knees and think it worthwhile living just to save one soul from an eternal hell like that if there's a real hell then we should take salvation seriously we should take our call our commission our message that we've been delivered to deliver to others we should take it very seriously very seriously indeed and where will you be 100 years from now you're not going to be in Elizabeth Park where will you be 100 years from now doesn't that matter isn't that more important than the earthly concerns that we rack our brains with and get all het up about how to make a buck and make a life but really it's about eternity it's appointed unto man once to die but after that the judgement and it says that every man shall give account of himself to

God are you ready to give account for the life you've lived for the time you've spent for how you've lived for whether you've received his salvation his work in dying on that place called Calvary where his precious blood was shed freely for you in our place and the Bible says that our very sin yours and mine was in his own body in that place on that piece of wood that he was nailed to that should matter to you that should count to you and will you be there where will you be in 100 years time will

you be where the the rich man is or where the poor man is now of course we know the eternal hell when when the end time comes it says that death and hell will be cast into the lake of fire so this isn't the eternal hell but it is a picture it is a picture to us of where people will go and friends then ultimately it says that death and hell so the place where the rich man is now will be thrown into the lake of fire the everlasting hell but nevertheless the point that

[27:38] I'm making is there is a hell and there's a heaven there's a hell to shun and a heaven to gain how do we do that it's not by only working of our own there's two destinations and either you are rich or poor now we're not talking about how much money is in your bank account you could be the wealthiest man in Australia in the world and miss out on heaven and really are you rich you're very very poor because you've missed the whole point of why you're here why you've been created why you have a life to live what matters isn't the riches in your bank or wallet what matters is the riches in your soul as it says of some are you rich towards God have you got are you spiritually rich or are you spiritually poor and one day one day death will come death will come and for a believer it's not really a sad time because it's a promotion for me to live is

Christ to die is gain it's going to be glory it's going to be no more woes and worries and his presence his face his smile his welcome and maybe an angel will come and transport you to that place just as it did for Lazarus an angel will escort you there you'll be welcomed with fanfare with joy and especially the heavenly lord will say well done you good and faithful servant enter into the joy of thy lord enter into his joy but is he a lord that's the question is he your lord your master that's what matters and that's what is going to make the difference for you so we're going to close it there i want you to be encouraged today to think about these things it's important it's very important because this is not fairy story stuff this is real it is real it's not make believe and it's important that you are sure where you are at with him tonight and friends if you are not sure of your standing before him i urge you to make peace with him call out to him as the bible says whosoever whoever you are whosoever shall call on the name of the lord call on his name shall be saved trust him call on him tonight let us pray thank you lord tonight for everybody for this challenge we've had from your word from the hope that we see in christ that you died in our place for our sin and we can receive that wonderful gift of your forgiveness of your love of your undeserved mercy to us lord we thank you for it help us lord each one to put our faith in you and to find those wonderful heavenly treasures those great riches that we have in christ jesus we thank you lord in your wonderful name amen