

Bad News Good News

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 July 2023

Preacher: Mr Donald M Mackinnon

[0 : 00] Christ. Amen. We're going to read two passages of Scripture from the New Testament, first of all, in the Gospel of Luke and chapter 16, and then we're going to turn to Paul's epistle to the Ephesians and chapter 2.

So first of all, the Gospel of Luke and chapter 16, and we'll pick up the reading at verse 19, down to the end of the chapter.

Luke chapter 16 and verse 19. There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and who feasted sumptuously every day.

And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.

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

[1 : 24] And in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

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.

But Abraham said, Child, remember that in your lifetime, 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. 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.

And he said, Then I beg you, Father, to send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

[2 : 43] But Abraham said, They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. And he said, No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.

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 if we can turn now to Paul's epistle to the Ephesians on chapter 2. Paul's epistle to the Ephesians on chapter 2, and we'll read from the beginning down to the end of the verse 10.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

- [4 : 26] By grace you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
- For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
- For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them, and so on.
- And may the Lord bless to us these readings from his truth. We'll sing once more from Psalm 90, from the Scottish Psalter, on page 350, and from verse 10.
- Amen. Psalm 90, from verse 10.
- [5 : 46] Three score and ten years do sum up our days and years. We see, or if by reason of more strength than some, four score they be.
- Down to the end of the verse mark 12. And so to count our days that we, our hearts, may still apply, to learn thy wisdom and thy truth, that we may live thereby.
- Psalm 90, from verse 10. Three score and ten years do sum up. Three score and ten years do sum up.
- Our days and years do sum up. We see, or if by reason of more strength than some, four score we give, we see, or if by reason of a RX0, five score we give, to know some.
- One thousandventh pulled men 12. Long worth. He'll beoliath of that and that week is over. And so to count our days now, we are lost.
- [7 : 10] Thank you for our days, even if we give us some hope. It gives us energy, awesome hope. We are so young, while yours are so young, let us know yours. Bye-and-go care. Thank you for some years, let us know yours. and and soon remove to north the power of thy wrath according to thy fear so is thy crown or shall us and my to him and so to his heart will be I of the the the the
- I am the angry, angry, and angry. Now tonight I want us to look at both passages of Scripture that we've read.
- And not just look at them, but I want us to actually turn to them both. So we're going to begin with the first passage of Scripture that we read. The Gospel of Luke, chapter 16.
- And I want us to look again at verse 22. The Gospel of Luke, chapter 16.
- And we'll pick up the reading at verse 22. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried.
- [9 : 43] And especially these words. And in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes. I'm sure we're all familiar with a situation in life where we're awaiting an outcome affecting our lives.
- And a person comes to us with news of that outcome. And they say to us, there's good news and there's bad news.
- And if you're like me, you'll say, well, give me the bad news first. And the two passages of Scripture that we've read tonight contain for us bad news first and then good news.
- Because the Gospel, as I'm sure I don't have to tell anyone of you, is the good news. That's how it's spoken of.
- The good news of the Gospel. And we live in a day when much reference is made to going out in evangelistic outreach with the good news of the Gospel.
- [11 : 04] We hear much about Christ-centered preaching in our day.
- And yet if we're going to go out and preach a Christ-centered Gospel, then surely we're going to have to follow the teachings of Christ.

And the reason I say that is because whilst the second passage of Scripture that we're going to look at is the good news, this passage that we look at is clearly the bad news.

And Christ, in his Christ-centered ministry, spoke more about the bad news than he did about the good news.

And that's understandable. How can the good news ever be good news to us if we don't first of all understand what the bad news is?

[12 : 07] And so as we come to look first of all at this passage where the bad news is conveyed to us, I want to look at these two men that are brought before us here.

One named and one unnamed. The two men in the passage. But we're also going to think about another two men. Two men who are not in the forefront of the passage, but two men who are in the background.

And we'll come on to these. And so in this passage we have before us an unnamed man. We're only told and he's referred to as the rich man.

And then we have a man who is named by Christ. And he names him Lazarus. And as we read in this passage, the same event unfolded to both of them.

The poor man died. And the rich man died. They both died.

[13 : 17] And as we come to look at the passage, it's helpful in our understanding of the good news and the bad news of Scripture to remind ourselves of how that came into my experience and into your experience.

Because whatever else is certain amongst all the uncertainties of life, there is one certain fixed truth.

I will die. And each and every one of you will die. But it's helpful, as I say, to remind ourselves of how that came into our experience. And I know I've spoken about this here before, but it's worthwhile going back over it just to refresh your memories on how death came into the experience of man.

And so we're going back to the book of Genesis and to chapter 2 and to the command given by God to Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And with it, the solemn outcome of that upon disobedience of that command in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.

[14 : 41] And so, as we know, in the garden we have Adam's disobedience. And so death came by disobedience.

And we need to understand the scope and the extent of the death that is spoken of there. Critics of the gospel often think that they've got a point here to score against the teachings of the truth and say, well, there you go.

God said to Adam that in the day he would eat, he would die. And yet he didn't die. But that's for them to misunderstand the extent and the scope of the death that was spoken of by God to Adam.

because the death that is spoken of there is a threefold death. First and foremost, Adam did die. In a split second into the experience of Adam came what we call and what the scripture calls spiritual death.

But at the same split second Adam physically, biologically began to die. Ever so slowly, imperceptibly death began working in Adam as it is working in each and every one of us now.

[16 : 16] and of course the third part of the death is eternal death. And so it can be said of each one of us that the truth about death is this that each and every one of us have been conceived in spiritual death.

We are born spiritually dead. We are subject to physical death. we are all subjected to physical death and we are liable to eternal death.

And that is what it means to be in Adam. Because I spoke about the two men that are in the background of the passage that we're looking at. And the two men that are in the background of the passage and very much come to fore in the passage in some ways is Adam and Christ.

Because in the experience of one man there is the fullness of that death as he experiences spiritual death, physical death, and eternal death.

And so as we look at this I want first of all in this passage to look at what it means to be in Adam and to experience spiritual death, physical death, and eternal death.

[17 : 40] Especially focusing upon the last of these eternal death. Because as we have read the rich man also died and was buried and in Hades or in hell he lifted up his eyes.

I'm not going to go into the meaning of the word Hades here tonight because it's just going to take up too much time. The translators of the ESV have chosen to use the word Hades. The other version, the previous version of Scripture that we used, used the word Hades and that's what I'm going to use tonight.

Not in any defiance of the NSV but quite simply of the ESV. Quite simply it's not a word that we would use in our vocabulary. We would never talk about heaven and Hades. We talk about heaven and hell.

And so that is where the rich man lifted up his eyes. He lifted up his eyes in hell. And that is the bad news of the truth.

This is the bad news. We can never ever ever fully comprehend the good news until we first of all understand what the bad news is. And to that end I want to look and I know I've done it here before but I want to look at this word hell.

[19 : 10] And I want to take the letters and I want to apply headings to each of the letters that make up the word hell and suggest that it is a hopeless eternal loveless location.

First of all the H of hell hopeless. five weeks ago today we gathered at midday for morning worship 12 o'clock on the 18th of June and unknown to any one of us over 3,000 miles away a vessel was beginning a descent to the Reich of the Titanic what we subsequently learned was the Titan submersible.

It began its descent at 12 o'clock on the 18th of June the very time we were in here. At quarter to two that afternoon all contact was lost with the submersible and by the following day the world press were reporting the tragedy and across the world we were all hoping hoping for those and for those inside that submersible.

The news outlets carried the information that those on board had 96 hours of oxygen enough to last them until sometime around Thursday afternoon and all the way through Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday each and every one of us exercised hope hope that they would be found hope that somehow or other one of the ROVs that were being lowered would be able to attach cables to the submersible sitting on the seabed as we thought it was and somehow or other be able to lift the submersible and rescue the men inside.

But at tea time on the Thursday the tragic news came that the wreckage of the submersible had been found on the seabed of the Atlantic and the vessel had suffered a catastrophic failure and at that moment any hope that we had was gone and I want us to think of that in this way we are here tonight in the realm of hope this is our place of hope and this is our time of hope but hell is where hope becomes hopeless because all hope is gone hell is the place where there is no hope the gospel declares to us tonight the hope that there is and I'm going to say something just now

[22 : 53] I want you to hear that because when I was preparing this a strange thing happened a memory came back into my mind that I had completely forgotten about but when I was in my early teens myself and my friends were in church one night we had stopped going to Sunday school and to please our mothers and fathers we began going to church on our own and we were sitting upstairs in Kennistried on one of the benches at the back and a woman fainted beside us the seat was cleared and men took and carried her out she was from the part of the town that I came from what's known as the Bathory she belonged to there but after church we heard the fact that the woman had not fainted she had actually died and so

I say that with all the solemnity that belongs to it because I want you to hear now that you are in the realm of hope and I don't know in the life of any one of us when hope can so easily become hopeless it can come as quick as that but there is this certainty it will come hell is a hopeless place but it is also an eternal place we step into the eternal realm now it's important to understand this we are not eternal we are immortal and the difference between immortal and eternal is this eternal has no beginning and eternal has no end we have a beginning we are immortal but we have no end so we step out of time into the eternal realm hell will have a beginning in the experience of those who find themselves in that eternal realm it will have a beginning but it will have no ending and

I thought much about what to say on this point because there is so much that we have to think about regarding hell it talks about it being a place of eternal weeping and who can imagine that it talks of it of being a place of eternal wailing and gnashing of teeth but for myself this is the point that as I thought about this that really came home to me it is a place of eternal darkness in fact scripture talks about it as being outer darkness I don't know about you I wouldn't say I suffer from sad or seasonal adjustment disorder as it's known but I do know that in my spirit I always feel a sense of sadness when we reach October and the clocks go back and it's dark by the time we get to

December at half past three in the afternoon it's something that's so enjoyable about this time of year yesterday morning I had to be up early for the ferry to the ferry and I couldn't sleep and I was up at the back of four o'clock and even then there was the first streaks of daylight by half past four it was evident that there was going to be a beautiful sunrise and by ten to five when the sun rose the whole village was bathed in beautiful pink light as the sun came up didn't settle after ten o'clock last night and we all enjoy the beauty of daylight but who of us can imagine what it is never to see light again to be in eternal darkness darkness and then there is the L the loveless it's a hopeless place it's an eternal place it's a loveless place because hell is the place where we experience the fullness of

God's wrath and hell is a place of perfect anger of perfect hatred and those that are there are so filled with hatred of God and what God has done that they would never want out of it one of the Puritans summed that up quite solemnly by saying the doors of hell are locked on the inside whoever's can imagine what it is to be in our realm that is loveless here we experience love in so many ways having recently experienced bereavement in my own family it was something so comforting to receive expressions of love some people phoned some people called round brethren came to pray with me others sent a card and if it taught me one thing it rebuked me because it's something

[29 : 03] I don't do often is send a card and yet it touched me so much what love was communicated by something as simple as a card and I know and you know so many expressions of love in our own lives and who of us can even begin to comprehend what it is to be in a place where there is no hope to be in a place of eternal darkness and to be in a place that is loveless where love is gone and only hatred is left and finally I want to say this it is a hopeless place it is an eternal place it is a loveless place and it is a location and that might sound a strange thing to say and

I say it's a location because hell is a real place I don't know where it is but it is a real place and in the day and the generation and the culture that we live in today the truth about hell has all but been airbrushed completely out of our thoughts and any reference to it anywhere in the 1960s an author by the name of John Blanchard was brought from death to life he came to faith and one of the first books that he read was a book I'm sure familiar to many of you on this passage of scripture that we're looking at and the title of it is the title you will see in your Bibles the rich man and Lazarus the author was Brownlow North and the book had a great effect on

John Blanchard he was deeply deeply moved by how much reference Brownlow North made to the awfulness of the doctrine of eternal punishment blanchard blanchard was so moved by what he was seeing in our nation that he himself wrote a book about the doctrine of eternal punishment and this is the title he gave to the book whatever happened to hell because even then in 1993 when he wrote his book he was seeing how in the preaching of the good news of the gospel the truth or the bad news was being left out in the thinking of the people in the thinking of our nation it was being removed the reverence for God was being removed and so he wrote his book and that is so evident in the day in which we live where there is so little reference made to hell and hell features nowhere in the thinking of our people and yet and for all that we may mourn about the lack of impact that the gospel is having in our nation while hell has been removed heaven has not and I ask you to think of so many times when you see for instance a tragedy happening and where there has been loss of life where life has been taken in cruel and barbaric ways and yet invariably those who have been affected and have lost their lives are spoken of as now being in heaven it seems to me today that everybody goes to heaven how they expect to be in heaven outside of

Christ well that's largely down to what has come into our nation with regards to their understanding about the doctrine of eternal punishment and so hell is a hopeless eternal loveless location and that came in as a result of disobedience into the experience of man spiritual death death physical death eternal death and that is the bad news but now I want us to turn and I want us actively to turn because I want to point something out and I know it's not customary for us to do it and I pray you'll forgive me for that but I want us to turn to Ephesians and chapter 2

Ephesians chapter 2 and I just want to read from verse 4 but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him now listen to this in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus and I want to lay particular emphasis on these words in heavenly places in Christ Jesus we read this chapter together from the beginning and it begins again making a reference to what we've already spoken about it begins speaking about spiritual death you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked every single person in here tonight who is in

[35 : 58] Christ Jesus was once in Adam but through the blessing of the Holy Spirit when the good news was preached in their hearing the Holy Spirit applied that with power and the work of regeneration took place in the life of each and every one who are now not in Adam but in Christ Christ that is why we come to the means of grace this is where we receive our salvation because Paul teaches us in the epistle to the Romans faith comes by hearing and in this passage we are taught that we are saved by faith and that not of ourselves it is the gift of God but it is by grace you have been saved by grace you have been saved and it is interesting for us what

Paul teaches us in this passage that we are looking at here because Paul makes reference to what the work of regeneration does in the lives of those who are brought as he says from following the course of this world having been dead in trespasses and sins but then receive the gift of faith by the grace of God you and I talk about people who receive that as Christians that's the common term we use for people who come to faith for people who are saved we call them Christians if you're going to go looking for that term in the New Testament you're going to need to know your Bible well because you will only find the term Christian three times in the whole of the

New Testament twice in the book of Acts and once in the epistle of Peter instead Paul uses another term he doesn't say we're Christians he says we are in Christ when you go home please read chapter one because there he really really really labours the point about what it is that happens in regeneration what happens in regeneration we are brought into union with Christ we are united to Christ and for Paul that was quite simply astonishing and over and over and over again as he talks about those who have been saved he doesn't call them Christians he says you are now in Christ and chapter one over and over again blessed be the

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ and over and over again he makes that reference in Christ the American theologian B.B.

Warfield said of chapter one of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians which he deemed to be one of the finest chapters in scripture that in his opinion it should never be read in church that was his opinion it should never be read he said it should be sung to the praise of the God who has brought us to be in Christ now in Christ and Paul here brings before us for those who are in Christ they are in heavenly places this is the good news the bad news in Adam is in hell but in Christ it is in heavenly places and if you're here tonight and by your own admission you're outside of

[40 : 55] Christ then this is the good news of the gospel that has been proclaimed in your hearing against the backdrop of the bad news and we've looked at the bad news it's hard for me to speak it it's hard for you to hear it but this is the good news we spoke about eternal darkness and this is one of the great great comforts of the heavenly realm those who are brought from darkness to light that they are brought to a place where there is no night those who reject Christ go to a place where there is no day but in the heavenly places there is no night how was that purchased for us it was purchased for us upon the cross of

Calvary remember how the gospel writers give us the account how Christ at nine o'clock in the morning was taken and suspended between heaven and earth the darling of heaven commenced the salvation of his people and for three hours God allowed the powers of darkness in all their force in all their fury in all their hatred to be unleashed in their entirety against them but then at midday God intervened as he put out his hand and he said to the power of darkness you've had your time with him you've punished him you've persecuted him you've afflicted him but now

I am going to deal with him divine justice now is going to deal with him and I am going to veil it all in darkness and as has so often been said that is the soul of his sufferings we don't know the depths of what he suffered there what has been referred to as the unknown sufferings of Christ but we do know this death because he defeated death and

I'm going to say this carefully because Christ died a death different to our death death because death will take each and every one of us but remember Christ gave himself to death death death had no claim upon him what are the wages of sin the wages of sin is death but the Lord Jesus Christ gave himself to death we could say that death arrived at the cross but had to wait and when the jaws of death opened to receive Christ it took him but it had to spit back out what it took because he defeated death and in defeating death he purchased eternal life for all for whom he laid down his life is there any greater news for us tonight as we stand and sit here knowing that each and every one of us are guilty each and every one of us have sinned there is none righteous no not one we know that you know your sin

I know my sin I think we all know that we are either in Christ or out of Christ we all know that if we are going to be in heaven it can only be by divine justice being satisfied and if we think tonight that we are going to somehow or other hold up something on judgment morning and say to God will this do then we are well and truly deluded and deceived divine justice must be satisfied and divine justice was satisfied by a

[46 : 54] God of love and by the provision of his love who satisfied that divine justice and in laying down his life purchased the eternal security of those for whom he gave himself to death I don't know how this is going to be with you when you leave this place but let me just close with two thoughts there is a very very solemn picture brought before us in scripture where we see in the life of Christ an incident where he's weeping weeping is not a tear running down your cheek weeping is not your eyes filled with tears weeping is uncontrollable crying fervent strong crying and

Christ was seen weeping outside the city of Jerusalem with his eternal insight seeing a people among whom he had conducted his ministry and he said of them how often I would have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chicks how often would I have gathered you but you would not I don't know that there's a more solemn picture in the ministry of Christ outside of his arrest and crucifixion and trial but certainly it's a very very solemn picture and I finish with this and I've said it here before and I wrestled with whether to say this again but I'm going to say it not long after I was converted

I was in a fellowship one night and a woman told the story of how she had been at evangelistic services in the district of Point what were known in their day as Ordean Beg they were evangelistic services and the service was being taken by Professor Douglas Macmillan a very popular preacher in her denomination who passed away in the early 1990s and Douglas was in great demand not only in the island but throughout Scotland throughout the UK and preached on the world stage abroad in great demand for a speaker at conferences and if you're familiar with his book The Lord Our Shepherd that book is what was sermons and addresses he made at a conference in Aberystwyth in Wales but that night in our hearing the woman told the story how she had been in

Garibus that night and Douglas had been preaching on a Sunday evening and the Garibus church was full to capacity including I understand some chairs in the aisle and Douglas was preaching a searching and an evangelistic sermon and he suddenly stopped and those in the congregation could see that he was becoming emotional and when he resumed this is what he said it has occurred to me while standing here in this pulpit that I can think of no people for whom a lost eternity is going to be worse and for the people of the island of Lewis who reject the gospel because of the power and the strength of the witness of the gospel in the daily life of the community and the island that you are seeing and that you are rejecting and

I believe that to be true I thought about it often I thought about it long I thought about it hard and I cannot think of another community that you can compare to the island of Lewis even in our day if only we were to take our minds back to yesterday when as a community we gathered in the solemnity of laying the mortal remains of one who was in our community and taken from our midst in death and everything that that speaks to us everything it is when we come to worship everything when we hear the readings that are selected the psalms that are sung the prayers that we hear and what will it be for our people who reject and our hope and our prayer surely is that we will once again see our renewal and our refreshing of the power of the

[52 : 47] Holy Spirit working in our midst in the way we saw it in other days when the power of the Spirit opened the understanding of our people to the reality of eternal damnation working in them a conviction of sin giving them that restlessness of Spirit that gave them no rest until they came to find what we heard this morning for those of you that were here the invitation of the gospel come unto me all ye who labour and the promise I will give you rest and our prayer tonight is that as we have gathered here the reality of a hopeless endless loveless location which is the bad news will be used by the

Holy Spirit to bring us to find what he said what Christ himself said that I have come to that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly and that the Holy Spirit will give us that life that eternal life that day that shall begin and shall always be the eternal day where we partake in the fullness of all that he has gone to prepare for us may he bless these thoughts upon his word we'll bow our heads sovereign father in heaven we do give thanks unto thee we pray oh lord our god that as we have sought to sow the seed of the gospel that thou would come now oh lord where all who sow that seed can do no more except prayerfully exhort thee to grant to it the increase that cometh alone from thyself and that it would please thee to add to our number to edify the faith of those whom thou has brought into union with thyself through

Christ and in mercy pluck brands from hell to make them the recipients and the inhabitants of the glory that is heaven and the praise shall be thine forever in Christ amen we conclude at this time singing from psalm 139 from the beginning of the psalm down to the end of the verse marked 8 psalm 139 from the beginning of the psalm on page 432 sorry oh lord thou hast me searched unknown thou knowest my sitting down and rising up yea all my thoughts afar to thee are known down to verse 7 from thy spirit whither shall

I go or from thy presence fly ascend thy heaven lo thou art there there if in hell I lie psalm 139 from the beginning Afar to thee are known.

My cruises are my God in love.

[57 : 24] Thou alone hast ever forgets. Thou lost, O most entirely art.

Acquaint with all my will. For in my time before I speak.

Not anywhere can be. But not in heaven alone, O Lord.

It is well known to thee. Behind before thou hast beset.

And laid on me thine hand. Such knowledges too strange for me.

[58 : 52] Too high to understand. From thy spirit with us shall I go.

From thy presence, Lord. Ascent I have.

And lo thou art there. There if in hell I lie.

I won't be going to the door, so we'll conclude with a word of prayer. Now unto thee who art able to keep us from stumbling.

And to present us blameless for the presence of thy glory with great joy. To thee our only God, our only saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[60 : 04] Be glory, majesty, dominion and authority before all time and now and forever. Amen.