

The Rich Man And Lazarus

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[0 : 00] We read again in God's Word in the same chapter from which we already read, Luke chapter 16. And we read in verse 14 that when the Pharisees heard the first parable, we're told that being lovers of money, they ridiculed him.

And so the Lord begins to tell them another parable, especially for them, in verse 19. 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 leaked his sores.

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

[1 : 21] 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, Son, 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 do so. 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. But Abraham said, They have Moses and the prophets.

[2 : 41] 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.

Again, may the Lord bless the reading from his own word. And we'll sing now in the first psalm. Psalm 1. A psalm which draws a very vivid contrast between the man of God and the man of the world.

That man has perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray in counsel of ungodly men, nor stands in sinners' way, nor sitteth in the scorner's chair, but placeth his delight upon God's law, and meditates on his law day and night.

He shall be like a tree that grows near planted by a river, which in his season yields his fruit, and his leaf fadeth never, and all he doth shall prosper well.

The wicked are not so, but like they are unto the chaff, which wind drives to and fro. In judgment, therefore, shall not stand, such as ungodly are, nor in the assembly of the just shall wicked men appear.

[4 : 24] For why? The way of godly men unto the Lord is known, whereas the way of wicked men shall quite be overthrown. The whole psalm, to the praise of God.

God establish you to his love, With those who want to remain, Psalm 35
And the pride and grace divine
Of the Jew and praise of His glory
In the glory and praise
And were he what we have
It is today and time
He shall be light, a tree that grows, near the
hundred fire, a river.

When children see the years' fruit, and his leaf day and never, a glory that shall prosper well.

The wicked arm was sold, but I came out unto the child, which made in Christ to and fro.

[7 : 00] In judgment, therefore, shall not stand by chance and gloria.

Nor in the land, the hope of God, shall we in heaven appear.

For by the wind of God be made, unto the Lord be told.

The first passage of the Bible, which we read, Luke chapter 16, and the second parable, which we read, from verse 19 down to the end of the chapter.

The parable usually known as the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. And as I mentioned just before the reading, there are two parables, as we saw in the chapter, and they're closely connected.

[9 : 05] They're bound by one common theme. And as I said, that theme is wealth and our attitude to it, and how important it is.

It's possibly something we don't normally think of as all that important, and maybe we don't even think of covetousness as a particularly bad sin.

But when we read this passage of Scripture carefully, we'll see just how serious a thing it is to love the world's resources, or to be in love with money.

And the key verse, I suppose, in the whole of the chapter is verse 13, where in a way both parables are summed up. In verse 13 we're told that no servant can serve two masters.

Either he will strongly hate the one and love the other, or else at least he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. And Christ says you cannot serve God and money, or material things in general.

[10 : 19] And this is a warning against that covetousness that keeps us out of the kingdom of God. And I'll tell you the dangerous thing about this covetousness, really.

And that's how hard it is to see, and how impossible it is for us really to judge. And that's true in a way that's not true of something else, say like theft or adultery, something that might be clearly visible.

So covetousness never is clearly visible like that. You can have a very, very wealthy man who just isn't covetous at all. But the fact is that you could praise someone for doing well in business, for being an upright person, and all the time that person is guilty of this serious sin, and this thing is the very thing that's keeping him out of the kingdom of heaven.

So what we think is a person doing well is actually the fruit of covetousness. And that's why we can't really judge it, and I can't judge it in you, and you can't judge it in me, but you can judge it in yourself.

You ought to be able to, by the grace and help of God, and me with you and myself. So let's ask God for that help, and just see if somehow God may be speaking to you, even through this tonight.

[11 : 41] You may say, I'm not covetous, I don't have much. It doesn't actually matter how much you have. Most of Christ's warnings against covetousness are addressed to the poor. That may shock you, but read your Bible and you'll discover that it's the case.

Most of his warnings against covetousness are addressed to the poor. You may have next to nothing, but all you do is dream of having more. That may be. So let's see if the Lord is speaking to ourselves.

And of course Christ is urging people here to be wise in their use of the world's resources. He was commending this unjust steward. He said, this unjust steward is bound by time.

He doesn't think of anything above his business and his business concerns. But look how he worked out his situation. He knew the crisis that was coming, and he fixed the situation to get himself out of it.

Well, you should recognize a greater crisis. An impending crisis of appearing before God himself. And you should take stock of that and spiritually work out the right response before that crisis comes.

[12 : 47] That's what the Lord says. And one thing we should do, he says in verse 9, is that we should make friends for ourselves without wealth or whatever resources we have.

So that when, now it says it fails here, but I think you fail is best. When you fail, when the time comes for you to die, the people that you have helped will receive you into eternal dwellings. In other words, if you use what God gives you, and what isn't really your own after all, it's God, still God's, you're just a steward. If you use what God gives you to help, the Lord's people especially, these people will welcome you one day into heaven itself.

They will welcome you personally into heaven as someone the Lord used to help themselves. Actually, we have an illustration of it in the next parable.

Well, we could have had. Let's put it like that. We could have had. Lazarus could have welcomed the rich man into heaven if the rich man had helped Lazarus.

[13:54] But he didn't. Use your resources wisely and use them honestly. Christ says, if we're not honest in the things which are least, neither we will be honest in the things that are most.

In other words, if we are fundamentally crooked and dishonest in our character here in this world, even with respect to how we handle these material resources, then he says you can't expect to enter into heaven and to be given the privileges and the responsibilities of heaven.

And there are privileges and there are responsibilities in heaven. These things show what we are. We can't expect to be a crooked businessman from Monday to Friday and think that somehow a Sunday religion will ensure that we get into heaven.

No. How we handle basic things like wealth will determine where we stand on the day of judgment. Solemn thoughts. Solemn thoughts indeed.

Now then, a lot of that was addressed really to tax collectors. I'm quite sure of that because at this point in Christ's ministry, many harlots and tax collectors, we're told, came to hear him.

[15:04] Now these were people that Pharisees thought were beyond the gospel. In other words, they had become so sinful in their way of life that God was essentially saying, leave them alone.

Too far gone. There's no hope for them. Don't go near them. But they actually were drawn to the ministry of the Lord. Even though it was quite cutting on themselves, they were drawn to him.

And our Lord tells the tax collectors what a Christian life will mean for them. God must be Lord of their resources, of their time, of their persons. Lord of everything. Lord of all or else Lord of nothing. But the Pharisees were listening and they didn't like it. And we're told why they didn't like it.

Because Luke tells us they were lovers of money. Now we would never know that. Nobody could really know that. But the Spirit of God tells us that through Luke.

That's what is true of their hearts. Christ knew it. Christ knew it that they loved money. And their response was they derided him. Audibly, in the presence of the people, they would be saying things like, that's not a right picture of how things should be.

[16:12] You're too hard on people who have amassed good things. They were just mocking his message. And if they thought that the Lord would tone things down or make things more acceptable, or if they thought that the Lord would say, but the Pharisees are all right, the Lord doesn't tone it down and he doesn't say the Pharisees are all right.

In fact, he proceeds to give this parable, which perhaps is the most sublime, powerful, graphic, dramatic parable in the whole of the scriptures.

I don't know of anything like this parable when you read it. Especially perhaps when you read it on your own, when you hear it and when you allow it to speak. There is something about this parable that just lives and grapples with you.

Something about it that you can't just read and leave. It just takes you by the throat and forces you to pay attention to what it is saying. It is as alive and as powerful as that.

And I hope that's the way in which it will come to us too. Because notice really that it isn't a parable. I'm calling it a parable and we always do.

[17:17] And I probably will as I go on. But it isn't one. Strictly speaking, a parable is an earthly story where the things spoken of have a spiritual correlation.

For example, Christ will speak of lamps or baskets or fish and they all represent something in the spiritual world. That's not what's happening here.

Hell here doesn't represent something else. It is hell. The rich man isn't representing somebody else. He just is a rich man. And the same is true with Lazarus.

He's not representing anybody. He is Lazarus. Their death is a real death. And the afterlife is a genuine picture of the afterlife. In other words, it's not a parable as such.

It's an illustrative example of a certain life and a certain kind of death. So let's hear it and let's take it to ourselves. And let's look at it as a kind of drama in which we see a strong contrast running all the way through it.

[18:20] You'll notice that. There's a contrast running all the way through it between two men. Everything about them is absolutely different all the time. It's different in their life. It's different in their death.

And it's different beyond their death. Nothing about them is really the same. And there's a never expanding gulf between them all the time.

Different in life. More different in their death. And vastly, infinitely different beyond death. So let's hear what it has to say.

And first of all, we could say as the curtain rises, the first scene is set at the home of a wealthy man. And we're led, first of all, inside the house.

Not outside, but inside the house. To a table. And everything's opulent and grand in the house. But we're led to the rich man who sits at that table.

[19 : 17] And he's fantastically wealthy. Everything about him indicates that. His clothes. Two items mentioned. Purple and fine linen.

Now that's just two items of clothing. This is how a man of status would dress himself in those days. In fact, it was usually a mark of royalty. That's how this man dressed.

The fine linen was highly valued. An import from India or Egypt. He wore that as his main garment. Outside it on the top was a purple garment.

Now, that was extremely expensive because the purple dye was hard to get. It was extracted from a shellfish off the coast of Tyre. And it was highly prized.

Now this man wore that garment. A white fine linen undergarment and a purple overgarment. Now that was the mark of status. Just like driving a certain kind of car maybe.

[20 : 17] Or having a certain kind of watch in your hand. Or whatever it be. A mark of status. How he clothed himself every day. And what's more, we're told that he ate in a special way.

He fared or ate sumptuously. Now the expression in Greek means to feast joyfully with show. Joyfully with show.

That implies, this might be interesting later, but it implies that he's at a feast. He's not on his own. He's not eating on his own. But there are people with him. Select group of friends.

And we're told that he eats like this absolutely every day. And that's the picture. That's all that's sketched. That's all that's said. It's enough. You get the picture. Simply drawn.

Then the scene changes very quickly to outside. And to the gate of the house. And there's a poor man. Cast there, we're told by Luke.

[21 : 15] And it's a very graphic expression. It means he was just literally thrown there and left. Why? Because he's disabled.

That's why he can't move. That's why even though he doesn't get enough food, he doesn't just get up and beg somewhere else because this man can't move. The reason anyone begged anyway in those days was because they couldn't work.

And the reason they couldn't work was because they were disabled in one form or another. And this man is so disabled that he just can't move from a spot. He's lying there. And he's in such a condition that he developed sores.

From the rich man's table. The implication is that he didn't really get that. Or if someone took a little to him, it wasn't the rich man anyway. Whoever had mercy on him and gave him something as they passed by didn't come from the rich man.

Probably didn't come from the rich man's house at all. But he wanted, just wanted, to be fed with the crumbs which fell from this man's table. And he doesn't have any company at all. No company.

[22 : 33] Unless you count the scavenger dogs which gathered round him and licked the sores. Now they used to say that there was healing in a dog's tongue.

And that there was comfort and soothing in a dog's tongue. And I'm sure that's true. And although it's here to add to this man's condemnation, look at the man, the dogs, the scavenger dogs are encircling him.

Although it's there to kind of add to his condemnation, in a way it highlights how callous and cruel the people inside the house were and especially the rich man. The dog licked and had some mercy and kindness.

There was absolutely nothing from inside the house. The rich man just doesn't bother. For the rich man, Lazarus is a scourge on society. Lazarus will be his own worst enemy.

Lazarus is a nuisance. Lazarus' disabled body proves that he is a wicked man, probably with wicked parents. And the fact that he's lying there begging means that he's lazy and not really worth helping.

[23 : 37] He might not have said it quite so graphically, but that's his inward thought. He just doesn't bother. Maybe at first when Lazarus lies there, he thinks, well, what should I do about this man? But through time, he says, just leave him be.

Riff-ruff. He's a reject in society and he's not really worth bothering with at all. And Lazarus hears the feasting every single day, but he's got nothing himself.

Nothing. This sketch closes with Lazarus having nothing except a name. You notice that? He's got a name. And the rich man doesn't.

Isn't that interesting? A little sketch. He's got nothing, but he's got a name. It's a significant name we'll see later on. But for now, the point is that he's got one.

And the rich man doesn't. Because God knows Lazarus. And in spite of appearances, God cares about Lazarus. You wouldn't think so, but God cares about Lazarus.

[24 : 42] And it's the rich man who's the nobody. He thinks he's a somebody, but he's the nobody. In the sight of God, he's the poor man. And the poor man in the sight of God is the rich man.

And the Lord knows them both. And he gives a name to this man and he gives no name to this man. Who's got a name in here tonight? Who's got a name? Who's got a name before God? Who's got a name socially?

Who's looked up to? Who's admired? Who's big in the town? Who's small? Who's a nobody? Who's in a tiny little house? Who's got a poor job? Who's looked down upon in the town? Who's up in God's side?

And who's down in God's side? It's what really matters, isn't it? That's what matters. And God knows this man and God names him as much as to say, I know him and I care for him.

But the curtain falls on that simple sketch. And when it rises next, suddenly the scene is their death. It's Lazarus who dies first and that too will become important.

[25 : 44] I hope I remember to take it up, but Lazarus dies first. And I'm quite sure that he just expires. That his skeletal frame just can't hang his body up anymore and he just gives up the ghost and he fades away.

There's no spices on his body. There's no funeral cortege. There's no funeral at all. There's no eulogy. No praise. There's no embalming. No tomb.

No burial. No. Nothing. In all probability, his body is just tossed somewhere and the scavenger dogs possibly just eat his body away. Eat his body away.

And again, the thing is, you see, all along, if someone was passing by this house, they would say, oh, look at the righteous man in there whom the Lord has blessed. And they would say, look here at this man whom the Lord has cursed.

And if you were going to look at their deaths or their funerals, you would look at this man's body and you would say, look at the death of the wicked. And if you were to look at the rich man, you would say, oh, behold, the end of the blessed.

[26 : 56] Because the rich man's altogether different. And you'll notice that. We could say maybe that he used his resources wisely or it looked as though he did. He planned for his funeral. He planned for his funeral.

We're told specifically about the rich man that he was buried. Lazarus, we're told, we're not told that he was. The implication is that he's not. The rich man is buried. He'd have his funeral expenses put to the side.

He's wise enough with his money and that kind. He'd have mourners probably hired for the occasion. There would be people putting spices on his body so that he smelled nice.

There would be friends telling about him. And you can picture what they say, well, he was a good fellow, really. And these parties that he gave, every single day we had these parties. And the stories he used to tell at these parties, he was a good man, this.

And they carried him, carried him to a great burial place in a rock. And they would seal that ornate tomb. And again, you would say, look at the man that the Lord has blessed.

[27 : 59] And what a contrast. What a contrast in their death. And the curtain closes just like that. And normally that's it. That's how it is in this life. That's it normally. The curtain closes.

One man dies here and another man there. A woman here and a woman there. One poor, one rich. And who knows the truth? Who knows the truth? We just can't see on the other side.

We can never see on the other side. We can believe and think and surmise. We just don't know.

But the staggering thing is in this parable that the curtain rises on the other side.

And we get a glimpse of who is in heaven and who is in hell. Who raises the curtain? We want to know. Who gives us the glimpse on the inside? Well, it's Christ.

If you want to know who is in heaven and who is in hell, he alone can reveal it. He alone declares the terms by which we enter the one and the terms by which we enter the other.

[28 : 57] If someone wants to tell you about the afterlife or me about the afterlife, I want it to be someone who knows. I don't want it to be someone from this side just like me. I want it to be someone from the other side.

Someone who knows God. Someone who knows eternity. And someone who knows the truth. And that's why Christ effortlessly, easily glides from speaking about what is true in this life into what is true about the next life.

Effortlessly. Why? Because he knows the truth. It's his own truth. It's his own heaven. And mysteriously, in a sense, it is his own hell. And he speaks as someone who has first-hand knowledge of all these things.

He pulls back the curtain for a moment and he shows us the reality. And what a remarkable thing it is. Again, you'll notice there's a contrast.

But the contrast gives us a shock. And it would give the Pharisees listening to this a shock. You know, listening to Christ would have shocked the people all the time. You couldn't just sit and fall asleep listening to Christ.

[30 : 02] No way. Because the message was simply too searching and too arresting and too demanding. There was a shock in what the Lord said here, especially to the Pharisees.

The amazing thing is that, first of all, we're led to Lazarus. And we thought he had no funeral procession. But amazingly, he does have a procession. We're told in verse 22 that the poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side.

Even as his body lay there decaying, uncared for a neglected, well, already he was involved in a glorious procession. Forget your funerals.

Forget your processions. On the earth, he was in a heavenly procession. The moment his soul left his body, God saw, God knew, God superintended, God sent a burning chariot of angels down to the presence of Lazarus to take his soul away into glory.

The same kind of burning chariot that was seen by Elisha when Elijah was lifted up into heaven. He saw something that happens all the time and we never see it. No Christian dies without an angelic accompaniment to heaven.

[31 : 20] No Christian at all. He doesn't go there on his own. He goes accompanied. And there's a presence of angels coming down to take Lazarus home.

And they leave him in the bosom of Abraham. The last time he had an escort, he was just dumped at a gate. But this escort takes him into the presence of Abraham himself.

And there's a reason why it's Abraham. Again, we'll see that later on. But Abraham's bosom is just an expression for paradise, an expression for heaven.

Christ isn't there yet, remember, in his body. He's not there in resurrection. He hasn't come yet in resurrection. So it's described as Abraham's bosom. Well, what's significant about it is, you see, is that the rich man would have gloried in Abraham.

And he would have said, well, look at Lazarus. He can't be a child of Abraham. But it's Lazarus who goes to Abraham's bosom. He goes there. And there's a wonderful thing about Abraham's bosom. Something that it conveys to us.

[32 : 26] You know what it conveys, first of all? It conveys that Lazarus is at a table. You remember how they used to recline at a table? You remember when Peter wanted some information from Christ?

He signaled to John, who was lying in Jesus' bosom in the upper chamber. Told John to ask something. Here, Lazarus is sitting at a table.

And that means that he's feasting. And what's more, he's got fellowship at last. He was alone for long enough. He's got fellowship at last. And what a fellowship it is. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob.

All these wonderful patriarchs. And these countless thousands of saints of God. He's sitting with them in heaven. Isn't that a wonderful thing? At last, all that is true for this man.

And what a contrast it is. I mean, he wasn't rich before, but he's rich now. He had his treasure in heaven. He trusted and believed in God. And believed that one day God would make it all good.

And God would make it all right.

[33 : 24] And God did. He lacked nothing in heaven. Not at all. Rich. Immeasurably rich. Is he clothed? He's no longer in rags.

And he's no longer in officers. We're told in Revelation that the saints of God are clothed in fine white linen. Isn't that interesting? The rich man had the linen down here. But Lazarus has the linen up there. He's got the righteousness of Christ. And he's got perfect holiness. And he wears that garment in heaven. He longed for it on earth. That was his biggest concern. It wasn't actually his food or drink. Poor as he was. His biggest concern was to be like Christ. And he's now like Christ. Clothed in fine white linen. Has he got food? Yes. He's sitting at that table. And is he comforted? Yes. Abraham says to the rich man. Now Lazarus is comforted. It's not the tongue of a dog.

[34 : 20] He's comforting him. No. It's the presence of God. And the presence of God's people. And he has all that he could dream of. And all that he could think of. And all that he could desire. He's got it all.

Perfectly happy with the joy of the Lord. And for him it was so true. It's true of so many of you. That weeping may for a night endure. And that joy, that mourn, that joy arise. We often apply that to our trials in this life. They last for a time and God takes us out of them. But view your whole life as a probation. View it all, if you like, as a trial. And for you it could be. God sustains you and blesses it in you. But you know, and maybe I know about you, that most of your life is a trial. But listen. Listen. It's nearly finished. A few years maybe. It's nearly finished. And you're going home for what? 20 years. 20,000. A million. It's an eternity. With God. That's life.

[35 : 15] That's eternity. We're just bound by this world. And that's how we seem to see everything. But Lazarus' weeping was over. And he went home to joy.

And suddenly the scene shifts. And it moves away from paradise. Across a vast, vast chasm. And a deep, deep chasm. And we're led into a gloomy, dark place. And there's a man sitting there. And he's alone. He's all alone. No sense of company. No sense of anyone with him. No feasting. No celebration. It's a dark and gloomy place. And this man hangs his head. And it's the rich man. The rich man.

Because the fact is that he had another procession too. I know that there was an elaborate procession to his place of funeral. But before that, he'd already gone.

[36 : 13] The soul had gone. The angels took him too. Not the same way. They took him where he was going. And just as Lazarus was one time cast at a certain door, so he's cast in a certain place.

Not laid gently against the bosom of Abraham. But he is left in a fearful place. Cast there. Cast there. And what a shock he got.

Do you think the people in hell, by and large, expect to be there? I think probably not. Probably not. Some do. I've heard of some people, and I think I've known some people, who expect to go there. I've heard of one person on his deathbed who knew it was imminent. Knew it was imminent. And would do nothing about it. Could do nothing about it.

Because he would do nothing about it. Too hard. Too far gone. Careless. Hell is coming. And I can feel it, he said. I can feel it. Do you think people are shocked?

[37 : 17] Yes. This man was shocked. We can tell from his language. He doesn't think he should be there. He thinks he should get out. That's how he certainly feels at first.

And the reason for that is that he's a covenant child. Let me put that into simple modern day language. He was baptized and he was brought up in the church. Just like you.

Just like me. Baptized and brought up in the church. He was circumcised in the covenant community. And raised up as a child of Abraham. Does he believe in this place?

Does he believe it really existed? If he did, it was for other people, not for himself. That's by and large how we think anyway. That's how the devil makes us think. Well, if hell is there, then it's for somebody else.

Not really for me. This man opened his eyes. In hell. In hell. Do you know what it's like to dream? A real dream.

[38 : 13] And you wake up and sometimes you're sad it wasn't true. But sometimes you're glad it wasn't true. Really glad it wasn't true. Sometimes the sense of relief that it wasn't true is just so overwhelming.

This man woke up to the reality of his worst nightmare. What he feared may be the case was the truth. It was, after all, the truth.

And if I fail. And if all the Lord's people fail to convince you that this is the truth. We should partly look to ourselves for that.

Why have we failed? Have we not been serious enough? Have we not been earnest enough? I'm afraid in my preaching I'm not serious and earnest enough. I'm sure my brother ministers are too afraid they're not serious and earnest enough.

Could I possibly leave you with the impression that this place isn't real? Or that you think I think it isn't real? Could I leave you with that? God forbid that that should be so. I know that the church by and large now leaves you with that impression.

[39 : 20] And may God have mercy on people for that. That the church could leave people with the impression that this isn't real. Hell has become the theological bogeyman. You know what a bogeyman is?

I was told about a bogeyman when I was wee. I was told that a certain place down the road there was a bogeyman there who would catch me. And for years I believed there was a bogeyman there and at night time I would never go.

Of course that's why I was told about the thing. But of course he wasn't there. And that's the way some people seem to speak about hell and think about hell as a kind of bogeyman. We're going to tell you about it.

We're going to speak about it. But actually it's not really there. But it is. And it's Christ who spoke about it. If it was some obscure prophet from the Old Testament that couldn't be proved whether what he spoke was right or wrong, fair do's.

But it's the Lord of glory who never tired of speaking of the reality of heaven and especially of hell. And war to me if I fail or not or anyone else too.

[40 : 26] It is real. And he opened his eyes and it is real. And for other people too. They've opened their eyes and the place is real. And it's a tragedy when people don't see that.

And the thing is you see that God means what he says. And this rich man thought that God didn't mean what he said. When God said thou shalt not covet the rich man said oh it's really okay. When God said remember the Lord's people and give to them the rich man had his own views and his own ideas about that.

He had his own ideas on what got you into heaven and what got you into hell. Just as maybe you do and I do by nature too. We have our own ideas. People say well I think this is true about God and I think this is the way to heaven.

And I say who cares what you think of what I think. Who cares what I think of you think. Let's have someone with authority speak. Let's hear someone who knows about heaven and hell speak.

And is that not Christ my friend. Is it not Christ. Is his word not worth listening to and relying upon. That this place is real. And this person went there.

[41 : 34] Let me put it that started for you. I'm not just saying that hell is a place. I am saying there are people there. There are people there. That's it. It's as real as that.

And if we could be impressed with the reality of that. God knows how that would change our lives. Shaking us as Christians out of our sloth. And of trifling with trivialities.

Making a message more urgent. And shaking you who are not a Christian. Into thinking well what's my life all about. And what does death mean. And is the sense that I have. Of death not being the end.

Is it real. Is the consciousness that I have deep down. That I am answerable to a creator. Is it true. Because I'll tell you what friend. That's a question worth answering.

And it's a question worth postponing everything else for. Until you answer it. I will not give sleep to my eyes. David says. Until I find a resting place for God. Let that be true in your own heart too.

[42 : 35] Don't. Don't get caught up with trivialities. And pet projects. And what you'll do with your spare time. Until you've sorted out your soul. Whether this is true or not. Because if it's true. How important it is.

How important it is. What's the rich man's condition. Well let's not call him a rich man anymore. Because he isn't. He isn't. He is poor. He took nothing into the world in the first place.

And he's got nothing. No. Absolutely nothing. Clothes. We're not led to think of him. I don't know what they are. But I'm sure his own body. That requires some kind of Kool-Aid.

Is somehow similar to the ulcerated body. That Lazarus had on his earth. The swapped garments. Swapped garments.

As he fed. He would give anything for a drop of water. Anything for a drop of water. As he comforted.

[43 : 32] Abraham says. You. Are in anguish. Lazarus is comforted. And you are. In anguish. And you may say.

Describe to me then. What that is. Well I'll tell you friend. I really can't. I can't really describe it. Means to be without.

The grace and comfort of God. But. There are words in the Bible. That describe it. Speaks of darkness. Speaks of the gnashing of teeth. It speaks of weeping.

Speaks of fire. And you say. But these things are symbols. Well. Yes. They may be. But. Symbols of what? Symbols of what?

There's no point in saying. Ah. These things are symbols. As though somehow. It is a holiday camp. That is being portrayed. By fire. And by darkness. And by gnashing of teeth. Let them be symbols.

[44 : 33] If you like. But of what? The worm that gnaws. And never dies. What is it? A symbol of. Something you don't want. And that's enough. And me with you.

I could try. And it would be a waste of time. And it would be foolish of me. And would be irresponsible. I could try to conceive of things that might be the case in hell. What good would it do? I don't know. And I'll tell you. And I'll tell you one thing. That if you've had even a pain in this world. What do you think it would be to carry it forever?

If you had a depression. Have you got a depression? Have you got a mild depression? What would it be to have it forever?

I get migraines. And every single time. Without fail. That I get a migraine.

[45 : 31] I give thanks to God. That I am bound for heaven. By his grace. And not for hell. Because a migraine is enough.

In other words. Why am I going to speak of pain and grief? When these things are enough to tell us. It is a place of anguish.

And let it be like that. In whatever form it takes. Do you want it? No. Do you think you could live with it? No. Well this man has it.

He's got it. And what's more. He is alone. You know if you're depressed with a friend. It's something. If you've got migraine with a friend.

It is something. But when you're all alone. That is the thing. And there's no trace of anyone around this rich man. He's looking for somebody.

[46 : 29] He wants something. But there's no trace of any help. At all for this man. He's got company. When he was in this world. But he's got absolutely none now. He's all alone. And if there is something hellish about hell.

It is how alone it absolutely is. Alone. And all alone. Where rich man are you friends. Who eulogized you at your funeral.

They're nowhere. To be seen. And in spite of his pleading. We're told that there's a great gulf fixed. That no man can cross. How big and how deep is it?

Well it's as big as the unchangeable justice of God. If God's justice could be changed. The chasm could be crossed. Can't be changed. Chasm can't be crossed.

No reversing this. No reversing it at all. And the tragic thing is. You know. There's a great gulf here. But when he was at home. It was such a short bridge to cross.

[47 : 26] Wasn't it? To go over to Lazarus. And say. Lazarus. Here. Take something from my table. Huh? Wasn't much. It's a short journey.

He never made it. And what God is asking of you. In a way. Is not all that great either. Not all that great. In one sense. Yes. In another sense. He's calling you to believe in Christ.

And to love. And to help. And to serve. And when we fail. There will be a great gulf fixed. And he's wanting Lazarus. To cross this chasm. When he didn't himself. Cross that small bridge.

Huh? Isn't that remarkable? Come across it Lazarus. And just give me a drop of water. When he didn't himself. Just give him a crumb. From his own table. When it was so easy to do it.

Hell is but the outgrowing. Of what we are in ourselves. And what we just choose to be. And that was him. Why was Lazarus saved? And why was the rich man lost?

[48 : 24] Why was Lazarus saved? Well the liberation theologians will tell you. Well he's saved because he was poor. Poor people are saved. Rich people are lost. Well the strange thing about that is.

Where did Lazarus go? To Abraham's bosom. He was no poor man. He had 300 people in his own private army. Never mind servants and staff of other kinds.

He was a rich rich man. But he wasn't covetous. Lazarus wasn't saved because he was poor. I'll tell you why he was saved. Because of the name Christ gave him. Which indicated his character. Names are important in the Bible. They often reveal character. Christ gave this man the name Lazarus for a reason. The name Lazarus means God is my help. And God helps me. Lazarus trusted in God.

That's the beautiful truth about this man. He trusted in God. And to other people it didn't look like it. He had faith and he had hope. And look at this for a moment.

[49 : 25] And listen to this for a moment. His providence was really hard. Hard. Hard. Do you think a man like Lazarus didn't pray to get better?

I'm sure he prayed to get better. Do you think he didn't pray for food? I'm sure he prayed for food. But he died a beggar. And Christ could have altered the parable.

And Christ could have said that he became very rich at the end of his life. But he didn't. He died a poor man. And he died a beggar. And I'm sure he asked quite often for lots of these things. I'm quite sure too that God reconciled him to the fact that he wasn't going to get it.

But there are people today who would say, Oh well Lazarus. Your fault you're lying there you know. Your fault you're still disabled. Name it and claim it. Come on. Stand up and walk. Get yourself a house like this rich man.

If you are really God's. God would give you that. Just ask for it. Pray for it. And whatever you pray God will give you. As though God never wills for the Christian to suffer. What kind of theology is that?

[50 : 23] What kind of grotesque imitation of Christianity is that? It is God's will for us sometimes to suffer. And sometimes to be hungry. And to be sick.

And to be poor. And he has a host of reasons for allowing that to be so. Because Christianity isn't just a fix like that for this life.

Some kind of get rich quick scheme. It's infinitely greater and infinitely deeper than that. It is God's will sometimes that we are like that. And Lazarus just had to come to this point where he rested in the love of God for himself.

He had to rest in it. And he had to say Lord I don't know why it's your will for me to be like this. But so be it. And that's true of you too. You may have asked and prayed for something and you haven't got it.

Well I don't know why. But let me just say this. That your trial just might be for the sake of somebody else.

[51 : 26] Not just yourself. Let me put it as starkly as this. Lazarus poverty was partly for the sake of the rich man. Partly for the sake of the rich man.

And what do I mean by that? It's a case of God saying. Here. I am putting my child on your doorstep. And this will be the touchstone of what kind of man you are.

And if he dies uncared for and unhealthied by your hand. You. You are guilty of these things. It's not solemn.

That God can put something in our way. That is a touchstone of what we are. Maybe our last opportunity. And maybe our last chance. The next door neighbor is a Christian.

Who is really weak and sick. Not just for their sake. But for your sake. What are you doing about it? What am I doing about it? Do I help the Lord's people?

[52 : 30] Do I care for the Lord's people? Do I love them? Do I minister to them? Your trial can be for someone else's sake.

You're here and you're sick. And it's because of the person beside you in the pew. Not just because of yourself. You're ill. You're in financial trouble. You're rejected by people. And it's not just for yourself.

It's for your father. It's for your mother. It's for your brother or your sister. However, God puts you there to see how they respond to it. No man is an island.

We don't just go through what we go through for ourselves. But for someone else's sake too. God could be using you for someone else. And I say that partly to comfort you. The fact is, friends, that we sometimes just don't know why God puts us through what we go through.

And sometimes we resist it. I know that. I do too. I do too. I'm no better. I resist it too. And question God and say, why is this?

[53 : 29] Yes, but inevitably God brings me to this that he knows best. And he has his reason. And faith says, leave it there. Leave it there. Job wanted to know all the answers.

And God said, I'm God and you, Job. And just leave it there. And we have to, friends. Believing that all things will work together for the good. Why was the rich man lost?

Please bear with me. Especially you who are younger. I'm so glad to see you listening very well. It won't take that much longer. I apologize for going on with this part longer than I thought.

But please bear with it. Why was the rich man lost? Oh, some people might say because he was rich. No.

He wasn't lost because he was rich. Church of Christ should give thanks to God for people who are rich. Should give thanks to God. Many a person has opened their hearts with what God has given them.

[54 : 30] Sometimes in very quiet ways. They don't make a song and dance about it. I suppose if they did, you'd be able to say, oh, well, he's doing that and she's doing that with their money. Sometimes quietly. Doing so much with that resource.

Praise and thank the Lord for it. He's not lost because he's rich. He's lost because he served wealth. It was his God. Material things mattered most.

What I ate, what I drink, what I possess, my money. These are my gods. In verse 25, Abraham says to him, Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things.

That means the things you thought were the good. The things that you valued the most, Abraham says, you got them. You got the lot. Nothing was withheld from you. What is it that you think is so good here tonight?

Certain kind of car. A certain job that you would love. A certain job you would love. A house you've got your eye on. And these are your good things.

[55 : 36] Good things. Your possessions. Well, you could have them all. The lot of them. The lot of them. And end up like this man. What's it worth, eh? What's it worth?

What's it worth, really? If we gain the whole world, Christ asks, and lose our own soul. What's it worth? What a pathetic transaction it is at the end of the day.

This man served wealth. Well, Lazarus was an opportunity for him to change. It wasn't just Lazarus knocking at the door.

God was knocking at the rich man's heart. And saying, look, change, turn, find out what's leaving this man here and see how you can help him. No, he doesn't do it. He sells his wealth.

But not only that, but he's got a false religious hope. See, this man is a Pharisee. That's often missed in this parable. But this man is a Pharisee.

[56 : 38] Father Abraham, he says. Oh, how difficult it is to let go of this hope. Father Abraham. He calls to him from beyond the chasm, in the outer darkness.

Father Abraham. As much as to say, you owe me something, Abraham. You owe me something. How can you possibly turn your back upon me?

This man prized his ancestry. He prized his circumcision. He prized the law that he kept in his own external and highly selective way.

The Pharisees kept the law, but it was extremely selective. When people weren't looking, you wouldn't believe what they would get up to. Selective and external. But he prized his ancestry and all these things.

And so may you. You say too tonight, Father Abraham. You may not be a Christian, but you're saying, Father Abraham. Because you're saying to me and you're saying to God, I had this mother and I had this father.

[57 : 42] I had a godly home and I was born and brought up in Kennel Street in the Free Church of Scotland. And I've attended it every week of my life. Well, good.

And I mean that. Good, good in all these ways. Good that you had these parents. And it's a tremendous blessing and privilege to have parents who prayed for you. And if you were brought up in the covenant.

If you attended this church and other churches too. Good, good. But is that it? Is that what you've got? Do you suppose that you'll wake up and you'll say, Father, have mercy upon me?

No. We stand or fall before God ultimately on our own. Community matters. Covenant matters. But you stand naked and absolutely, utterly alone before God at the judgment seat.

And you must give account for yourself and what you did with it all. That's it. It's as stark as that. But he thought Father Abraham would sort out the situation. And this is stubborn. What I mean by saying it's stubborn is, I'm still amazed that people were born and brought up in the Free Church.

[58 : 49] And you talk to them and you still discover that underneath this, God isn't really going to condemn me because of these things. So God doesn't mean what he says then.

These things are precious. But they don't save your soul and they won't save mine. But he thought Father Abraham. And Abraham actually says son back to him.

Did you notice that? Son or child as it is here, remember that you in your lifetime received, you could think, it's as though Abraham says, oh yes, you were indeed, you were indeed in that privileged position.

But didn't you abuse it? Didn't you abuse it all? And friend, are you abusing all that? Are you abusing it? Just thinking that it'll all be all right in the night.

Well, some things aren't just all right in the night. And this is one of them. Our society is very used to safety nets. But there isn't one here. If you don't come to Christ, there is no safety net.

[59 : 58] Nothing. Nothing at all. And what he should have done was said, well, he should have helped Lazarus. And even in helping him, perhaps his own tendency to hard-heartedness would change.

And maybe he would seek the Lord. And when Lazarus died, and when it would be his turn to die, Lazarus would welcome him to heaven. Make for yourselves friends with your wealth.

That the people you help will receive you. Lazarus would have said, hear everybody. Look at this man coming. This is the man who helped me. That kind of thing will happen. I have no doubt in heaven.

You will seek out people in heaven who helped you upon the earth. You'll seek them out. And you'll gladly point them out. And you'll rejoice in what they did. More in heaven than you even rejoice in it now.

And there will be some people who will be glad for you. You too. Unthinkable as it is. Maybe too, as sometimes there will be people who will point and say, this person helped me.

[60 : 57] That could have happened. But it didn't. This is a tragedy. This is a tragedy. And the root, and I'm finishing with this, the root of this man's problem leads us to unbelief.

Listen to these words in verse 27. And I am finishing. Then I beg you, Father, send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may warn them lest they come into this place of torment.

But Abraham said, they have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them. Now, are you listening to what he's saying? He's asking for Abraham to send Lazarus to warn them, his brothers, in case they come to the same place.

It's easy to miss this, really. But in these words, Lazarus is blaming God. Do you notice that? He's blaming God. What he's saying, the subtext of what he's saying is, you didn't do enough for me. You had sent me someone from the dead.

[62 : 09] I would have believed. Now, there you have it. See, hell isn't changing this man. He's not getting any better. He's got plenty of remorse, but no repentance. And these are very different things.

Remorse is an angry frustration at what you've done. Repentance is a loving change in another direction. There's none of that here.

All he can do in hell is blame God for the fact that he's there. Send Lazarus. If you had sent someone like that to me, I would have believed.

And Abraham says, no, no, no. No. Don't think a shower of ghosts is going to change anyone's mind. And is it? You may think too that if someone appeared here from the dead that it would change you.

You think that. Someone from the dead appeared to you that it would change your heart. No. Miracles are of value to those who already believe.

[63 : 06] They don't make believers out of anyone at all. You would have your way of explaining it anyway. You would. I tell you, you would rationalize it somehow or other. This place could be filled with visible ghosts and it wouldn't change you one whit or me with you.

It doesn't change anything at all. It is recognizing the truth of God as it comes to us powerfully in the word that changes us. Abraham said, your brothers have Moses and the prophets.

Let them listen to them. And it is in that your duty and mine. God has sent us a word. We don't know how privileged we are to have this book called the Bible.

We really don't. It's a seamless garment from beginning to end. You sometimes think maybe it's dusty and it's dry but you know when you open it and you really hear it you recognize there's something here beyond human wisdom.

There's somebody speaking to me beyond a man. I am in touch with the unseen world. I am in touch with eternity and with God. And that exactly is the truth.

[64 : 13] It is God who is communicating with you through Moses through the prophets and through the Lord Jesus Christ. And with the book of the Revelation the Bible is shut and God says hear now it is and hear the message and respond to it.

Don't ask for ghosts. Don't ask for spectacular signs. Don't ask for words written in heaven. Just hear the gospel and believe it and your soul my friend shall be saved.

And let me say to you that that's the longing of my heart and the longing of my brethren's heart and every Christian's heart that your soul tonight will be saved because whatever the world tells you your soul is important.

It matters a lot. The evolutionary theory means it means nothing. I hope you understand that. You're just a lump of earth. You're just a collection of gases, chemicals and atoms.

You mean nothing at all. But according to the God, word of God, you mean a lot. Your life means a lot and it is worth a lot. And God sent his son into the world to seek and to save sinners.

[65 : 19] Will you not just hear that? Please my friend, hear it for your own sake and come to know it. Because that is life. Now and there are life to come.

Let us pray. Lord bless us with gospel blessings and make us wise unto salvation. Help us to seize the opportunities that are presented to us on our own doorsteps, especially when the gospel is preached in our hearing.

For it is preached to us freely and it is preached to us by your grace and in your kindness. Help us not then to resist it or to refuse, but to embrace the Savior who stretches out his hands towards us in kindness.

And what we ask, we ask in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.