

## The Rich Man and Lazarus

### Scripture Reading: Luke 16:19-31

#### Introduction:

A few years ago there was a TV show called Early Edition.

It was one of my favorites when it was on.

The main character would hear a cat meow and something dropping by his door.

In this program he would receive a paper every day that showed what was going to happen the next day.

He would then set out to correct the bad things before they happened.

Through a series of events in which he often put himself in harms way he would accomplish his destiny.

#### Spiritual Application:

If we as Christian believers new something bad was going to happen to someone we love wouldn't we try to prevent it – wouldn't we?

Before we go further let me give you some statistics I have found:

Experts say that 3 people die every second. So by the end of this sermon – if my sermon is 30 minutes there will be 5,400 people who will die.

If this fact is true, then 180 people die every minute, 259,200 people die every day, 94,608,000 people die every year

Of the six billion people on earth today, experts also say that 2/3 of them have never heard the Gospel one time.

If these percentages hold true, then 63,103,536 people die every year without ever hearing the Gospel one time! \*\* Some of these people are within our reach!!! \*\*

This coming Wednesday evening at 7 our annual scheduled revival will begin with Dr. Stephen Manley.

As your pastor I want to somehow try to encourage you to make time in your busy schedule to come and allow your heart to be renewed spiritually.

Would you let this time be the most important time during the week?

Would you come and allow God to speak to you through one of God's chosen men?

This morning I want us to take a journey with Jesus in one of His parables and look at one person's plight in hell.

I read a sermon this past week that was entitled: "IF every Christian went to hell for five minutes."

Now – we all know that is an impossibility – because we know that it is not God's will for any one to go to hell.

The Scriptures teach us that Hell was prepared for the Devil and his angels. Matthew 25:41 it reads, ***"Then He will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"***

The whole plan of salvation is to keep people from a destiny in hell and to save them to an eternal fellowship with God in heaven.

I thought about this and dwelt on it for quite a while – to be honest with you I really struggled with the Lord to want to preach this – but I felt God through His Holy Spirit lead me to preach this message before we begin our revival.

So In a sense this is a preparatory sermon for our coming revival.

I've asked the question in my own life – what will it take to see lost people dying and doomed without Jesus?

I asked myself the question – Dan, what is it going to take to wake you up and wake up our people whose hearts are calloused, cold-hearted and indifferent toward those who are lost without Jesus?

I must confess to you this morning that my heart was convicted in a greater way than any of you will ever know.

There have been times in my ministry when I have experienced life's awakening call from God.

And I bowed my head at my desk and I pleaded for God to help me to awaken me to people who need Jesus and if they don't come to Jesus they will die and go to hell.

As I read that sermon entitled: "If every Christian went to hell for five minutes," I thought to myself five minutes would seem like an eternity, but if it were to motivate me and change me and motivate you and change you . . .

**What would we learn from this kind of experience?**

**I. First – We would learn that Hell is Real.**

**Folks – Hell is not a myth or a bad dream or the creation of some fantastic fiction writer.**

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As a matter of fact Jesus warns of hell and speaks of hell more times than He spoke on heaven.

**Hell was a reality to our Savior to the extent that He died on a cross to save people from it.**

That was the God's Divine Plan of Salvation.

**Hell was a reality to the apostle Paul to the extent that he suffered great privation and hardship and martyrdom that he might communicate the Saving Gospel to those who were lost.**

That great Apostle Paul said, ***"I speak the truth in Christ – I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit – I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race . . ."*** Romans 9:1-3

Can you get a hold of Paul's groanings over lost people?

**Hell was a reality to the Rich Man mentioned in the story by Jesus.**

It's important for us to understand that this story that is told by Jesus gives us these facts:

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***19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 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.***

### **A. Two Men**

- a. Rich man (unnamed in the bible)
- b. Lazarus

### **B. Two Different Life Styles**

- a. The Rich Man
  - He was rich.
  - He wore the fanciest clothes.
  - He had plenty of food and any thing else he wanted.
  - He had the best of the best.
- b. The Beggar (Lazarus)
  - Poor
  - Sick (full of sores)
  - Dogs were his best friend (they licked his sores.)
  - He would have been happy with just the crumbs that fell from the rich mans table

### **C. Two Different Burials**

**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; 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.**

The beggar died and was carried into Abraham's bosom.

Abraham's bosom was considered the place where saints went at time of death (a place of paradise, a place of rest and comfort.)

His undertakers were Angels

The rich man died and was buried.

The funeral was probably the best that could be bought in those days.

Possibilities:

- Paid mourners
- Fancy casket
- Big Feast

It reads in verses 22b – 23

***“The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham...”***

**1) The Rich man was in possession of his consciousness.**

He knew where he was

He could remember what his life was like on earth.

He remembered the good times

He remembered the times when he didn't do the right things.

## **2) The Rich man described his feelings**

He was in torment.

He was thirsty beyond description.

He wanted Lazarus to dip his finger in water to cool his tongue, because he in agony of fire.

## **3) He was in a hopeless condition.**

When he spoke to Abraham evidently who was in heaven – Abraham told the Rich Man that there was no way he could change his circumstance.

Abraham said, ***“Between us and you there is a great chasm that has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.”***

Folks, it was a hopeless condition.

**4) The Rich man had a concern for his five brothers lest they come into the same torment.**

**If we were to experience hell for just five minutes - What would we learn from this kind of experience?**

## **II. Such a trip would cause the church to be aroused from a state of complacency.**

I am strongly convinced the Church in America has lost its sense of purpose when it comes to reaching the lost and unsaved.

In many circles the church has become a social club.

### **Illustration:**

When I was going to Wesley Bible Seminary in Mississippi I pastored a small Independent Methodist Church in Yazoo City.

We weren't the Big Church in Yazoo City.

The Big Church was downtown.

It was a known fact that if you were anyone of position then you needed to be a member of the Big Church.

Now – I want to be clear I'm not talking against the United Methodist, the Baptist, or for that fact the Nazarene - what I'm talking about is being a Member of what people felt was THE Church. All because of status!

### **The Church is not just a service organization.**

**I want us to clearly understand what Jesus meant when He established the Church.**

**The Church is our Lord's rescue station charged with the responsibility of persuading**

**people to forsake their lives of sin and rebellion against God that will eventually place them in hell.**

### **Illustration:**

The newspapers contain stories week after week of those who have greatly endangered their own lives to save someone else in peril.

You who have had cancer knows what it's like to appreciate the skill and the knowledge of surgeons who have gone into our bodies and removed the cancer and gave us a new lease on life.

My cancer surgeon, Dr. Bruce Woodworth will always hold a special place in my heart and life.

Pastor Karen told me on Thursday that Friday was her last day of radiation treatments and the doctor told her she was cancer free. Isn't that Great?!!!

### **Spiritual Application:**

If believers in all churches in America would really believe that all of those who died outside of Jesus Christ would spend eternity in hell, we would become an army of compassionate people who would change our world unlike anything it has ever seen.

**No Help – No Hope – Too Late!**

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***25 But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. 26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from here to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from where you are.'.***

The tables are turned – Now instead of Lazarus begging the rich man is begging for relief.

**What would happen if all of us could get a glimpse of the Rich Man this morning?**

**What if we could pull back the roof of hell and look down and see someone we knew who had gone there?**

**What would they say to us?**

**III. What difference it would make if we as His Church would be genuinely Christian in all of conduct?**

Let me suggest to you this morning that the most effective sermons ever preached are not those that are spoken from behind a pulpit.

You see – Jesus tells us that the Gospel is demonstrated in life.

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The effective testimony from the lips and the heart of a true believer will only be effective as they put into action what they have heard from behind the pulpit.

**By referring to His disciples as the 'Salt and Light of the earth,' Jesus was emphasizing the value of influence.**

People we rub elbows with every day will not be convinced in the Savior unless we demonstrate that He makes a difference in our lives.

**That's why the Apostle Paul emphasized this truth when he said, "*If meat makes my brother stumble, I won't eat meat while the world stands.*"**

Can you be honest this morning and do an inventory on your life just to see if there is any area in your life that would offend others?

Would they say, "Well, I just don't see any difference in them! They say they're a Christian but the way they act sure doesn't prove it."

You see – our Christian conduct must always be guided by our motive to attract people to our Savior.

What we say  
How we act or react  
Habits that are not Christ-like

Attitudes that hurt our testimony

**Let me continue on my thought here: As I was reading that sermon this last week and I realize this is not a popular sermon this morning.**

**But if we could just look into hell for 5 minutes what would it do to us?**

**IV. Such an experience would greatly influence our personal spiritual growth and discipline.**

**Prayer would take on a new meaning.**

We wouldn't have to beg for people to get together to pray for the lost and unsaved.

Prayer would take on a new meaning when we were brought into a vital contact with an Eternal and Awesome God.

Pray would be recognized as the vehicle for God to work within us and through us to make us more effective in our witnessing and living the Christian life.

**We would become diligent students of the Divine Word of God. Why?**

The answer would be to help those who have personal needs in their lives.

We could direct them to helps from the Bible.

**We would respond to the church with a much deeper love and faithfulness and loyalty, because the church is the only institution God is depending on for the evangelization of the world.**

If we were to look down into hell and see what was happening and listen to the screams of agony – I believe with all of my heart – we would never have a financial problem in the church.

Believers would faithfully give of their tithe and give abundantly more than what they ever have.

Our Faith Promise Giving would be met every year plus a surplus going to help our 750 missionaries spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We would be involved in the Jesus Film ministry supporting it in offerings and gifts and watching multitudes come to know Christ as their Savior.

We would be involved in present ministries and starting new ministries that would reach the lost and disciple the new believers.

**If we were to have the experience of seeing the Rich Man in Hell**

**V. Such an experience would enable us to learn why people choose to go to hell.**

In verse 30-31 it reads these words, ***“No, father Abraham,’ the Rich man said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to my five brothers, they will repent.’ Abraham said to the Rich man, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”***

**People do not go to hell because of the design or desire of God.**

**People do not go to hell because they have sinned so greatly that God is unable to save them.**

**People go to hell because they refuse to repent and come to Jesus.**

**In Luke chapter 13 and verse 3 it reads, *“But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”***

**People go to hell because they live a selfish life of sin. Romans 6:23 reads,**

***“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”***

We all have loved ones, neighbors, and people we come into contact with almost every day who are

more concerned about their own lives and seeking pleasure than they are in preparing for eternity.

**People go to hell because of the churches neglect to tell people about God’s love and forgiveness.**

**John 20:23 *“If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”***

Did you know this is the authority of the Church?

By our obedience to our Lord’s command to be witnesses, we become the means where people hear the Word and seek forgiveness, and consequently they escape an eternity in hell.

For us as His Church to neglect to share this witness of Jesus Christ is to involve ourselves in guilt for these unsaved people to remain in their sins.

It’s almost too terrible to contemplate that people will go into eternity unprepared to meet God because of the indifference; the unconcern; and the failure of believers to bear a witness on the part of those who consider themselves followers of Christ.

**VI. The End Is Only the Beginning**

## Today hell is not a popular topic.

Many say that if God is such a loving God then He could never create such a horrible place of punishment.

He would never make you suffer without end.

### Illustration:

In my last church, I preached on hell one Sunday morning and after the service I had a wife and a mother come to me.

She doubted if there was really a hell.

And told me that she felt that even if people were to go to hell that God would eventually obliterate hell and those people's existence would come to an end.

I told her this was not what the Word of God taught.

- What we for get is that hell was not created for mankind. Hell was created for Satan and his Angels.
- Matthew 25:41 tells us ***“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:”***

## Many do not even believe in a literal Heaven or Hell.

In December 1998 Life Magazine wrote that 80% of Americans believe in an afterlife, but only 72% believe in heaven, and even fewer, 56%, believe in hell.

**I am here to tell you that there is a real burning hell and people are dying and going there every day.**

Revelation 14:11 tells us ***“And the smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever:”***

Revelation 20:10-15

***10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. 11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and hell***

***were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.***

### **Conclusion:**

Forget the fire, and the flame and the Torment.

One of the worst agonies of hell will be the ability of people in hell to see those who are in heaven.

Can you imagine lost husbands seeing their wives in heaven?

Lost parents seeing their children in heaven?

I don't want any part of a place like that. Do you?

**1) Hell is a place of remorse and despair when they see the bliss of God**

**2) Hell is a place of hatred of the very evil that they had loved.**

**3) Hell is a place of eternal desire for freedom.**

**4) Hell is a place of memory of lost opportunities.**

**5) Hell is a place of regret over deeds committed.**

**6) Hell is a place of absolute hopelessness.**

**7) Hell is a place of eternal separation from loved ones.**

**8) Hell is a place of fire.**

**9) Hell is a place of remorse for not listening to the Word of God.**

**10) Hell is a place without opportunity**

**11) Hell is not the end!! It is only the beginning.**

\*\*It is our responsibility as Christians to warn people about hell and tell people about the wonderful place called heaven. We can't teach one without teaching the other.

\*\*If we don't warn our friend and loved ones no one will.

Scenario I

Imagine a scenario where you go through life daily and never mention God to those around you. They see your life, they know you are a Christian, or do they? Besides you know about God and how to be saved. They have the same opportunities you do, right.

You get to the end of your life. It is time to meet Jesus face to face.

Will you stand before Him ready to meet Him or stand before Him with the blood of others dripping from your hands.

The blood of the one's God brought before you but you never witnessed to or shared the love of God with.

If you don't reach your loved ones chances are that no one will.

God has done all within His power to save people from going to hell.

Every Christian believer must become a part of those who cooperate with Him in His work of saving people from a hopeless eternity.

If you have not yet received Christ as your Lord and Savior, would you do so right now?

I know you want to be prepared for an eternity of fellowship with God.

Possibly your mother or your father has gone on before you. They're in heaven waiting for you.

What would happen if you just decided not too?