

The Horror of Hell and Hope of Heaven

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[0 : 00] We're going to read from Luke chapter 16 verse 19. This is going to be a sermon in two parts really. 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 the angels to Abraham's side.

The rich man also died and was buried and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

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'm in anguish in this flame.

But Abraham said, child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things. Sorry.

[1 : 43] And Lazarus in like manner, bad things. But now he is comforted here and you're in anguish.

And besides all this, between us and you are great chasms being 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, I am to send to my father's house.

For I have five brothers. So that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment. 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, then they'll repent. And 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.

[3 : 07] This is the word of the Lord. Now this is the concluding talk of our mission-minded weekend.

A weekend to re-energise ourselves for mission. To rally support for mission. And to recruit workers for the harvest of mission. Unashamedly.

Now last year we took the topic, what is the gospel? And this year we've looked at the topic, heaven and hell. Now as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, I am to be just that.

A disciple of the Lord Jesus. And as a disciple of the Lord Jesus, all of us are to be just that. Disciples of the Lord Jesus.

People who learn Jesus, follow Jesus, become more and more like Jesus. And what's the fundamental thing that God would have his disciples do?

[4 : 14] Tell the person next to you. What do you think Jesus is a fundamental thing he'd have his disciples do? There could be thousands of fundamental things, couldn't there?

But what are some of the fundamental things he'd have disciples do? Well, Jesus said, love the Lord your God, nor your heart, nor your soul, nor your mind, nor your strength.

And love your neighbour as yourself. That's one of the fundamental things that Jesus would have his disciples do. Jesus says that if you love him, we will obey his commandments.

And when Jesus rose from the dead, we read the closing words of Matthew 28. He said that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. All authority.

All authority. And then he told his disciples to make disciples of all nations. Not just some nations. Baptising them in the name.

[5 : 26] That is, washing them. Instructing them. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you.

And behold, I'm with you all ways, all the days, to the end of the age. Now, in light of heaven and hell, there is nothing more important, nothing more urgent for us to be doing than just that.

Engaging in the task. Together. Of making disciples. More and more disciples of Jesus. Who continue to make more and more disciples of Jesus.

Who continue to take more and more disciples of Jesus. Taking the message of Jesus to the ends of the earth. That is the paradigm. Our mission is to see people from every tribe, town, nation, become disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before it's too late. That must surely be our organising principle for what we do as God's people.

[6 : 54] While we wait for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. My personal mission statement has been this. To make it to heaven and take as many people with me as possible.

That's my mission statement for my life. Starting with my family. Around me. Those in our local church.

Who God has entrusted to me as pastor. And those in the community that I knock around with. And for us, the St. Lucia Bible Church in St. Lucia.

In Brisbane. In Queensland. Australia. And the ends of the earth. Now, that requires a team effort. Each of us putting our shoulder to the wheel.

So to speak. So that we can work together. In making disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Each of us putting our shoulder to the wheel.

[8 : 04] It's not sufficient just to have people start following the Lord Jesus. That's great. Don't get me wrong. That is foundationally important.

But it's imperative. That people who start the race. Finish the race. Continue and grow. And see others come to follow Jesus Christ as well. It's a team effort.

All of us working together. To see that same thing happening. Which is. People coming into a knowledge of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then being transformed.

Become more and more like him in our lives. Now some people might misunderstand me. When I say we need to be on about making an ever increasing number of mature and equipped disciples of Jesus.

Right? Some people might misunderstand me. So let me be absolutely clear. If you think. If you think. That the only model.

[9 : 02] Of a mature and equipped disciple of Jesus. I care about. Is someone becoming. An MTS. Graduate. And becoming a missionary to Austria.

Right? You've completely misunderstood me. Completely understood what we're on about. That would be to misunderstand. What a mature disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ looks like.

God is the one who arranges every individual part in the body. To play their part in making disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we love each other. And as we love the lost.

We've all got our part to play. And it makes sense. Right? That the more and more people. Who are trained and equipped. To become more and more godly disciples of Jesus Christ.

There'll be more and more people saying. You know what? I've been given the gifts. And the abilities. And the skills. To go and do that. In a way which is dependent upon others. To help me do it. So we can do it. With more time to do so. And so.

[10 : 04] The more and more. We should be seeing. And entrusting the gospel. To lead the way. In making disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the next generation.

And every geographical location. Until the Lord Jesus returns. That is the body of Christ at work. We're not all hands. We're not all eyes.

We're not all ears. We're not all faces. Not all nose. Not all feet. Not all hearts. Yet it's the body. Under the direction of the head.

Jesus. Being on about. What the head. Jesus. Is on about. Yeah? Yeah. Now as the head. Directs the body. Where's the body going to go?

Well. The body. Is going to go. Where the head. Wants everyone to go. And that is. Every man. Woman and child. Who's ever existed. And will ever exist. Coming to know. That the Jesus Christ. Is Lord.

[11 : 03] God. And it's the love of Christ. And the love of the lost. That will energise us. For this task.

Love for God. Love for his word. Love for one another. Love for the lost. Leaving any of those out.

Will be deficient. In our discipleship. Leaving any of those out. Right. And will we not be making. Mature. Godly.

Disciples. We don't need. The adjectives. Right. We don't need. Mature. We don't need. Godly. We don't need. Those other adjectives. We just need.

Disciples. Because disciples. Will be. Mature. They will be. Maturing. They will be. Growing in godliness. We will be.

[11 : 58] Translating. Transforming. We will be. That's what disciples are. We will be. Learning. Jesus. Now. If we love the lost.

Without loving one another. We won't be known. As disciples. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. We could end up. Just becoming. Legalistic. Pharisees.

Who are on about. Making a convert. Of someone. Across the other side. Of the world. For our own glory. That's failure.

Isn't it? But if we love. One another. Without loving the lost. Then we won't be. Faithful disciples. Of Jesus either. Because. We could end up. Just becoming. A cozy club. Without any concern.

For the millions. Going to hell. What I'm trying to do. Is lead us. In working together.

[12 : 52] In the magnificent. Mission. Of making more. And more. Disciples. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. Until he returns. By. Presenting.

By. Proclaiming. Christ. To everyone. With the aim of. Presenting. Everyone. Mature. In Christ. To Jesus.

When he returns. Friends. Now. One key reason. For this. Is the reality. Of heaven and hell. But not just the reality. It's the horror.

Of heaven and hell. So. We move to the second half. Of the sermon. Now. Luke chapter 16. And Jesus.

Actually. Brings up. This. Teaching. But the context. Goes back. But. He's been talking. About money.

[13 : 50] In chapter 16. Right. And you pick it up. Here. Verse 12. And if you've been. Faithful in. What. That which is in others. Who will give you. That which is your own. Then he says. Verse 13. No servant. Can serve. Two masters.

For either. He will hate. The one. And love. The other. Or he will be. Devoted to the one. And despise. The other. You cannot.

Serve. God. And money. The reality. The reality is. No one. Can serve. Two masters. You'll hate one.

Love the other. Be devoted to one. And despise the other. So far. So good. Right. But here comes.

[14 : 46] A sting. You cannot. Serve. God. God. And money. You.

He's addressing. The disciples here. The Pharisees. Are listening in. Right. Cannot. Serve. God. And money. Cannot.

Serve. God. And any. Other. Master. You'll be. Disciple. Of one. And an. Enemy. Of the. Other. Father. It is. Impossible. Just like. It's. Impossible. To jump. Off a building. And flap. Your arms. And think. You won't. Go to the ground. Just like.

It's. Impossible. To think. You can. Swim. Unassisted. To New Zealand. And not. End up. In the briny. Just like. It's. Impossible. To squeeze. The camel. Through the. Eye. Of the needle. It is.

[15 : 40] Impossible. To serve. God. And any. Other. Master. And one. Specific. Example. Is. Given. It's. Impossible. To serve. God. And money. Now.

The Pharisees. Here. Okay. Look at verse 14. The Pharisees. Who were lovers of money. Heard all these things. And they. Ridiculed him. So.

He teaches them. How horrible. It is. To serve. Any other. Master. And he. Homes in. On money. Because money. Can be a terrible. Master.

In the story. The rich man. Lazarus. Here's the situation. Verse 19. 21. There's a rich man. We don't know the name. Rich man. There's no account. Who cares. What his name is.

But he's certainly rich. Purple clothing. Is very expensive. Fine white clothing. Is very expensive. And he feasted. Not monthly. Not weekly.

[16 : 38] But daily. Now that is. Extravagant. Wealth. Feasted. Daily. Kings feasted. He's feasting. Like a king. Daily.

Right. It's sumptuous. Feasting. It's the finest. Of all food. He has to be. Extraordinarily. Rich.

To do that. And he would be thinking. God loves me. I've been so blessed. By God. I've got all this. Treasure.

God must be. I must be doing. Doing something right. You know. Why would I have. So much. Good stuff here. And those. Who look on him. Will be thinking. He's extraordinarily.

Blessed by God. God's smiling. On him. God's his friend. He's surely. Heaven bound. God's holy.

[17 : 32] and then there's Lazarus. We know his name. The contrast couldn't be greater. He's outwardly unclean, covered in sores, needing help to get laid at the gate, thrown down at the gate.

Could be a cripple. Craving something. You just have something to eat. But not even given the food scraps that would fall from the rich man's table.

Even the dogs, even the dogs licked his sores. The unclean animals licked him.

He's a picture of woe, of absolute horror. It seems that he's under the curse of God. Couldn't get any more dejected picture of humanity.

But what happens? Both die. Death comes to rich and poor alike.

[18 : 46] It's the great leveler. It cannot be avoided. It's universal experience of mankind. No one escapes it. You won't escape it.

I won't escape it. It only happens once. And then comes the judgment. And surprise, surprise, to those who hear the story.

The poor man goes to Abraham's bosom, Abraham's side to paradise. And the rich man goes to the horror of Hades.

The rich man is not under the blessing of God. He's under the curse of God. Now here we have a picture of a place that exists prior to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Hades is the place where all the dead go. And in Hades it appears that there's two places prior to the resurrection of Jesus.

[20 : 03] A place of horror, of suffering, which elsewhere we know as Gehenna. A place of absolute disaster.

And there's a second place in Hades. A place of glorious hope, of blessing, of comfort, of paradise, here in the bosom of Abraham.

The two things are very clear. Both the rich man and Lazarus are conscious. A person is not annihilated upon dying.

And one place is full of hope and one place is full of terrible horror to be avoided at all costs. And now we see the appeal, verses 24 to 31.

The appeal of the rich man. The appeal to the judgment. You know, I'm appealing this decision. It can't be right. Let's change it.

[21 : 10] Or change my circumstances. Or something. But here's the appeal. By way of three requests, which all involve having Lazarus do something for him, and they're all answered by Abraham in the negative.

Did you see? Follow what happens. Firstly, the rich man makes an appeal for mercy. Verse 23 and 24. The rich man's in torment. Life for him is not pleasant.

He's in Hades. He's being tormented. He's not repentant. Literally, he's in severe pain. He's being punished. He's experiencing one of being tortured continually.

Lazarus isn't with him. He's far off at Abraham's bosom with the man of faith. And the rich man calls out for mercy.

Send Lazarus to do his bidding. To bring me a drop of water to cool my tongue. He still sees Lazarus as someone he can push around and order around, as someone to serve him. And he wants, not a scrap of food, but a drop of water.

[22 : 21] The rich man's in agony. Don't make any mistake about it. There's nothing good there. He's in anguish in his flame. He's suffering physical torment, suffering and pain.

And the answer from Abraham? No. Verse 25. Abraham said, Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things, but now he's comforted here, and you are in anguish.

The tables are turned. Lazarus is not going to come and bring any relief. You had a good life. Did nothing to relieve Lazarus' anguish. But things are different now.

You're suffering. Far worse than Lazarus ever was. And Lazarus is being comforted. You're in anguish.

Lazarus isn't. And even if Lazarus was to try and to come, he couldn't get to you. See, there's a chasm that can't be crossed between you and him. There's a real, everlasting, ongoing divide between the two.

[23 : 25] You can't be crossed by anyone from either side. Verse 26. You can't go to him. He can't come to you. It's over. The separation is eternal. Verse 26.

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. First appeal denied.

Second request. Send Lazarus. Verse 27 and 29. Being denied his first request, the rich man makes another. Send Lazarus to warn my brothers.

So they won't come to this place of torment. Notice the repetition. Being cut off from God is a place of torture. You really don't want to go there. And again, the rich man wants Lazarus to do his bidding.

The rich man still sees Lazarus as less than him, but Abraham says, no. Verse 29. They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them.

[24 : 27] Which is a way of saying, they have the whole Old Testament. They have God's Word. Let them listen to God's Word. It's got much more authority and power than Lazarus' Word.

Really. And God's Word says consistently to look out for the poor and the oppressed of Israel. Leviticus 25 speaks about supporting your brother when he becomes poor.

Certainly not treating you with contempt. Deuteronomy chapter 15 speaks about not hardening your heart to the poor following the Israelite amongst you. They'll always be poor, so be generous to them.

Deuteronomy chapter 15. The Psalms speak about God rescuing the poor. Psalm 112. Speak about the righteous, wealthy man who cares for the poor and is generous and gracious to the poor.

It's clear that the wealthy man is not righteous, he's not gracious, he's not compassionate, not caring, not reading God's Word. No. Listen to the Word of God.

[25 : 29] Third request. Send Lazarus. Verse 30 to 31. Being denied his second request, the rich man is getting even more desperate now.

He debates the sufficiency and the power of God's Word, telling that, and even arguing with Abraham. Do you see that? About how effective it would be if Lazarus went to them? Verse 30.

He said, No, Father Abraham. But if someone goes to them from the dead, then they'll repent. The rich man thinks he knows better than God.

But notice it's too late for the rich man to repent now. Nothing can change his situation. But surely if someone from the dead came and told those who were alive, they'd believe that there is a heaven and a hell, wouldn't they?

And they'd change their ways. Do you believe in heaven and hell? It's clear you really don't want to go to hell.

[26 : 35] It's conscious, it's painful, it's never ending, and there's no escape. And what does Abraham say? No. Verse 31.

If they won't hear Moses and the prophets, that is the Word of God, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead. Can you hear that?

If people won't hear the Word of God, if people won't respond to the Word of God, if people will not believe and repent when they hear the Word of God, then no amount of persuasion will bring them to respond rightly to it.

Not even if someone was to rise from the dead. Now that's a real problem, isn't it? That's a massive problem. We've got Jesus' Word on it. And the implications are massive.

No program will work. No miracle, no matter how big it is, is going to bring someone to repent. No rhetorical style. No experience.

[27 : 39] No amount of social action. No amount of argumentation. No amount of rational logic. Nothing. If someone will not believe the Word of God, they will never repent.

Even if someone was to show up from the dead and tell them, they'd finally find a way to reject what is said. I don't know if someone's asked you, you know, if someone came back from the dead, I'd believe in Jesus.

If Jesus just turned up, I'd believe in Him. Haven't they? They've told you that. Oh, my answer to you is, no, you wouldn't. That's the answer. No. Jesus has.

And people don't heed His warning. It is only in the mercy of God, by His Spirit working through His Word, that anyone will ever believe God's Word, as He works in us and our friends to bring them to faith.

As He works in our families, as He works in our children, as He works in our neighbours, as He works in our colleagues, by His Word and His Spirit, that people will ever come to faith in Jesus.

[29 : 03] And so, be rescued from hell. Brothers and sisters, may we never be anything like the rich man in this story.

May we never be in the same situation as the rich man's brothers in this story. Now, if you're here this morning, it may be that God is being very merciful to you.

And He's working in you by His Spirit to believe that there are consequences for living in rebellion against God. And that you've been hearing for a while now that we keep teaching that Jesus rose from the dead.

Don't go home without repenting and trusting God's Word and becoming a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. I beg you. But let's be clear on a few things now.

Considering reality. I've got three things considering reality. They're fairly quick, right? You can jump around really quickly. First, the reality of heaven and hell are real. Jesus speaks about it clearly that there are two places.

[30 : 20] One is a place of pain and torture and horror which is ultimately far worse, right, than where the rich man ended up. There's a place far worse than Hades. And the other is there's a place of comfort and blessing which awaits all those who hear the Word of God and believe it and obey it which is far better than even the bosom of Abraham's side being spoken about here.

Second, heaven and hell are eternal and there's no crossing over from one to the other. Third, death awaits everyone including you and me whether rich or poor and then comes judgement.

We are destined to die once and after that to face the judgement. And there's no ground for appeal. Okay, well how are we going to respond to this reality?

Okay, how are we going to respond? Firstly, God asks the question which master, huh? Which master? What's this got to do with mission minded?

First of all, none of us, me included, can serve two masters. And the only master to have is the Lord of the universe. Jesus, who rose from the dead and is Lord of the cosmos.

[31 : 41] Jesus is the Christ, the King, Master. He needs to be the one who directs, rules, guides our lives. Chasing after money is a cruel master as is any other master to be chasing after.

Career, love, identity, success, whatever that is. Comfort. None of us can serve two masters. I can't, I shouldn't, I won't, I mustn't. It's impossible.

God says so. And so the question is, who is my master? The second, we need to be warning the world, don't we?

We need to be warning the world. Love will compel us to warn people of heaven and hell. Heaven and hell are real. And since we know it from the lips of Jesus what's coming, we should believe it.

How can any of us, right, stand by and watch millions and millions of people plunge over the abyss into hell without at least having some desire to warn them?

[33 : 06] I'll tell you the sting of the tail on this one. Because not to have that heart would make us even less compassionate than the rich man.

Yeah? And he is a rotter. Love for neighbour because that's what Jesus says would mean at least being willing to tell them to warn them even if they won't believe and then the blood's on their head not mine.

Now if Jesus says that even someone was rising and dead they wouldn't believe it's impossible isn't it? How's it ever going to happen? We need clarity of vision.

If people will listen to the scriptures God may work in them by his word and his spirit to believe that heaven and hell are real. God may graciously do that.

It's all by grace. And if people will listen to the scriptures they may well believe that Jesus rose from the dead and then they may well heed the warning and repent.

[34 : 37] If they do believe that Jesus rose from the dead confessing him as Lord then like us they will not face hell they will be destined welcomed into heaven.

Which means that God would need to be at work through his word to bring people to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So what should we then be on about? We need more and more people praying for more and more people to be believing the word of God to both hear and to heed the warning.

what we need are more and more disciples of Jesus Christ opening up the word of God with more and more people so they will hear and heed the warning. That's what we need. And what we need then are more and more disciples of Jesus proclaiming the word of God with more and more people so they will hear and heed the warning.

Yeah? What we need is less distraction and more focus. Less scattering and more gathering around the Lord Jesus Christ.

What we need to do is each of us doing our part clear on our purpose of being one body of Christ and for the love of God single-mindedly on about seeing more and more disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[36 : 06] Each of us testifying how good it is to be one of God's people. Confident that our future is not hell but heaven because of Jesus rising from the dead and conquering death and leading us in his train to glory.

All to the glory of God. Now one of the easiest things to be doing is simply making it a priority to be at church each week. That's the way to know and love each other.

You can't love each other at church. We can't do that if we're not there ourselves. Well, well done. You're here. Well done. Great. Let's keep doing more and more of that.

But another thing, right, that's the priority, right? Get here. Gather with God's people so we can love each other. Sunday by Sunday to keep reminding ourselves, stirring each other up, re-energising, refocusing, recruiting to the gospel work.

And another thing is that we could be inviting everyone we know to join us at church. When was the last time you invited someone to church with you? When was the last time I invited someone?

[37 : 20] Well, I invited the butcher the other day actually, just talking to him what he's doing. He said, I'm pretty bored. He said, well come to church with us. I invited my neighbour the other day, she's not getting enough hours at work and I said, well come and join us at church.

He said, I know who you are, I know what you do, yeah, I might. Well, there you go. I invited another lady to come to the, another neighbour to come to knowing God.

She said, you know what, I'm a Catholic, I've got no idea what the Bible says, I'd love to come. Fantastic. But there's so many things conspiring in her life that she hasn't been able to come yet, but God willing, we'll keep asking.

we've all got our part to play as we devotedly, single-mindedly serve the Lord our God and keep re-energising each other in our part of the work of making disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, of rallying support for the work, proclaiming the gospel of Jesus, being partners here, with partners all over the world.

It was lovely yesterday hearing how we could be partners with Steph. We could actually, rather than wait for her email to come to us, we could actually be proactive in writing an email to her and all our missionaries.

[38 : 49] And for some, for some, to use the God's gifts he's given to us to be set aside to be leaders of God's people for the cause of the gospel.

Now, in the light of the reality of heaven and hell, let's keep giving ourselves to playing our part in bringing Jesus and the hope of heaven through faith in him to a world that is otherwise going to hell.

And that might just me send me. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, these weighty things as we see the weird stuff, the stuff that we can't see by sight but we can see by faith.

please work in us, we pray for your glory. Amen.