

(Henry) *As the parable of the prodigal son set before us the grace of the gospel, which is encouraging to us all, so this sets before us the wrath to come, and is designed for our awakening.* Whether this is an actual historical event or a made-up story is debated. In either case, Jesus uses it to teach scoffing Pharisees spiritual truth to wake them up. To wake US up. May we hear Him.

## **Two Earthly Lives, Two Eternal Destinies**

**Verses 19-22** Two very different men are described. The rich man loved his money dearly, lived and ate luxuriously and lavishly. Lazarus was a poor man, laid outside the rich man's gate (paralyzed, lame?), full of painful sores that scavenger dogs licked, longing to be fed with the rich man's scraps. Though the rich man knew Lazarus' name (24), we have no indication that he ever helped him. After they both die, Lazarus goes to heavenly bliss with the faithful saints, seated at Abraham's side (bosom) at the heavenly banquet (that's the picture), while the rich man is in Hades, the place of torment for unbelievers as they await the final judgment that will send them into the eternal lake of fire. (Matt 8:11-12) *I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom (Jews who didn't believe in Jesus) will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* Both Lazarus' and the rich man's destinies tell us about their earthly lives. Lazarus had

saving faith and true repentance, leading to eternity with God. But not the rich man. Notice the context. Jesus has taught on being faithful stewards of our money, using it for eternal purposes and helping others; that we can't serve God and money (1-13). And remember, the Pharisees were lovers of money (14), greedy, covetous; money was their master. The point is that they are like this rich man. The context of the chapter being about money and him being described primarily as a rich man who is in hell, we are to see that his love of money kept him from following God in true saving faith/repentance, demonstrated by his disregard for God's desires to care for the poor, love his neighbor as himself (Lev 19.18). (MacDonald) *This particular rich man showed that he did not have true saving faith by his careless disregard of the beggar who was laid at his gate. If he had had the love of God in him, he could not have lived in luxury, comfort, and ease when a fellow man was outside his front door, begging for a few crumbs of bread. He would have entered violently into the kingdom by abandoning his love of money...He had no genuine love for God, and no care for his fellow man.* Like the priest and Levite in the Good Samaritan story, he passes by Lazarus without meeting his needs. He didn't faithfully steward his money. He served/loved money, not God. Though the Pharisees boasted of their self-made righteousness, they were like the rich man - lovers of money, not following God in true faith and repentance. That this rich, Jewish man in Jesus' story ended up in

hell would have been a shock to these Pharisees, who expected that of course they'd be in heaven. Riches, they thought, were a sign of God's favor for keeping the Law and being righteous, so surely they were blessed by God. Sickness/calamity like Lazarus had, were believed to be a sign of God's displeasure (*Job's friends, blind man – John 9.2*). So it didn't make sense, one like them being in hell and one like Lazarus being in heaven. Besides that, they were children of Abraham. The rich man addresses Abraham as father (24, 27, 30), but him being in hell shows the Pharisees that they can't depend on just their physical heritage as a Jew, God's chosen people, to bring them into God's everlasting Kingdom. (John the Baptist, Luke 3:8–11) *Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."* Their law-keeping, riches, and heritage weren't assurances that they would be saved. Though Abraham was their physical father, they didn't have his faith that led to bearing fruits in keeping with repentance. And as such they were headed to the fire. They needed saving faith, demonstrated by letting go of their love of money out of

love for God and using their money to take care of the needy and love their neighbor as themselves. (Piper) *The faith that justifies, purifies.* If we have saving faith, it will lead us to a life of repentance and obedience that will show up in the way we use our money. Money will lose its idolatrous place in our lives. We won't use it for lavish living at the expense of stewarding it well for eternal purposes, loving others, and helping those in need. We aren't saved by how we use our money. We are saved only by faith in the **Gospel**. But being saved will lead us to use our money in the way God calls us to. *Oh, the love of money and the desire to pursue riches is so deceptive and hard to see in our lives. We fool ourselves into thinking "I'm not a lover of money" and justify ourselves so that our padded lifestyles won't be affected. May God open our eyes and show us if our love of money is keeping us from truly following Jesus. May God open our eyes, blinded by our greed and comfort, that He may have His say over how we spend every dollar we own.*

For lovers of money, money is a greater god than God Himself. They spend their lives building temporary kingdoms that will not stand and the expense of entering God's Kingdom. On the day of his death, the rich man's wealth failed him (9) and he went to hell. (Mark 8:36) *For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?* Jesus is the greatest gain, worth losing everything for. *Don't sell your eternal soul for the pursuit of earthly treasures that will not last.*

**Verses 22-28** The rich and the poor both die. And at death, what we did in response to Christ's call to faith and repentance will determine where we end up. In this story, the one who let earthly comfort keep him from following God entered a hellish torment. The one who didn't let his earthly torment keep him from following God entered heavenly comfort. The ungodly rich man apparently had an honorable funeral (**buried**) while his soul anguished in hell. There's no indication Lazarus had an honorable funeral, but his soul was ushered into heaven by angels. The ungodly rich man went from a table full of food every day in the house to an eternity without even a drop of water outside of God's heaven. The godly hungry Lazarus who received none of the rich man's table scraps outside the gate went to the great heavenly banquet with the faithful saints in God's dining room. (Piper) *If during our time on earth we pursue after "things" instead of God - after luxury for ourselves instead of love for others - then earth will be the extent of our heaven and eternity will be our hell. But if during our time on the earth God is our treasure, no matter how many bad things happen, then earth will be the extent of our hell and eternity will be our heaven.* (Cole) *A Sunday school teacher told his class the story of the rich man and Lazarus and then asked, "Now, which would you rather be, boys—the rich man or Lazarus?" One boy replied, "I'd like to be the rich man while I'm living and Lazarus when I die."* That's not how it works. If we reject the life of faith in Christ and

repentance of our sin for the love of money, or any other reason, then we won't know the joys of eternal heaven that our Savior bled, died, and rose to win for us.

Side note: Financially unsuccessful Lazarus had saving faith, lived it, and went to heaven. Financially successful rich man didn't have saving faith, proved so by his lifestyle, and went to hell. *Worldly condition is no sign of spiritual condition.* God chooses and uses many who are unimpressive from a worldly perspective (**1 Cor 1.26-31**). *May we never esteem people just by their worldly condition and prove that our love is truly for the things of this world. May our true heroes be faithful saints and not financial success stories.*

Those who, like the rich man, have died with true faith and repentance are now experiencing the reality of hell. The doctrine of hell is one many like to ignore, not believe, or explain away. But Scripture is crystal clear. (This part won't be fun to preach/hear) After death, believers immediately go to be with God. Likewise after death, unbelievers go into a literal torment, awaiting their final judgment of being cast into the lake of fire. This passage uses words like *anguish, flame, torment* to describe the rich man's eternal destiny. Hell is no fairy tale or lie to motivate faithfulness. Hell is a reality that Jesus makes clear here and in many other passages, directly from His lips: (Matt. 8.12) *Outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth*, (Matt 25.41, 46) *eternal fire, eternal punishment*, (Mark 9.43) *unquenchable fire.*

Always burning, always in agony, no hope of relief, forever. (Paul, 2 Thess 1:9) *They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.* These passages leave no room for wrong doctrines like universalism, annihilationism, purgatory (explain). Hell is very real. The rich man in Hades is aware of his agony, as will all in hell be. Eternally remembering your sinful rebellion against God while you had the chance to turn to Him, seeing what you traded eternal bliss for, will add to the forever torment. In hell, the time for mercy has passed and the time of wrath has come. There was ample opportunity to have streams of forgiving mercy flood over your soul through faith and repentance while alive on earth, promising you an eternity of paradise. But for those who rejected that while on earth, not even a merciful drop of water is available to bring a millisecond of relief from the anguish of eternal hell. *Oh, unbeliever, believe on Jesus and repent of your sin before it's too late.* The chasm between heaven and hell is fixed and uncrossable. After death, the saved are forever saved and the damned are forever damned. There will be no superhero moments where the underdog soul crosses a never-before-crossed chasm. There is no hope of a second chance; at death, your eternal fate is sealed. Hell won't be a party for sinners...the rich man didn't even want his brothers there because of the torment. *Loved ones who have died and gone to hell would beg us to repent and follow*

*Christ and not join them in the place of torment. Don't be like the rich man and choose the wrong "good things," letting the love of money, worldliness, or any other sinful, rebellious, prideful thoughts/attitudes keep you from the "best thing" of coming to Jesus in faith and repentance for eternal life. Nothing is worth trading heaven for. **My kid for a soda?** – the immeasurably valuable for something bad for me? Never. Repent today! Don't find out the truth of hell too late. Hell's reality should move the unbeliever to repentance/faith in Jesus and move the believer to urgently evangelize the lost. Damned souls in hell should not care more about the lost being saved than those on the way to heaven care about the lost being saved. In great love, let's move with urgency to save the lost from eternal destruction.*

God provided a rescue from the hell we justly deserve. (Jn 3:16–18) *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. **GOSPEL*** The question isn't: *Why would God send someone to hell?* We know that answer: *We deserve it!* The questions are: *Why won't you accept His free offer of rescue and be saved? Why won't you go give others a chance to receive His free offer of His rescue?"*

## **The Sufficiency of Scripture**

**Verses 27-31** The rich man had 5 brothers on the same path he was on, headed to hell as well. And he wanted Lazarus to be sent from the dead to warn them so they would repent. But Abraham replies that Moses and the Prophets, the OT Scriptures, had more than enough teaching to lead them to saving faith and repentance. It's the OT that contain the two greatest commandments, according to Jesus: (Deut 6:5) *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might* and (Lev 19:18) *You shall love your neighbor as yourself*. These, along with the rest of the Law and Prophets were enough to point them to a life of faith and repentance of their sin and keep them from loving money more than God and others. Additionally, the Law and Prophets pointed to the coming Messiah, Jesus Himself, who came with the good news of the Kingdom and the message of faith in Him and repentance of sin that would bring them eternal life if they received it and heeded it. But the rich man thought his brothers needed more than the Scriptures that they obviously disregarded. "They needed a miracle!" he thought. But Abraham declares that if they wouldn't be convinced by the Word of God to believe and repent, even a man raised from the dead wouldn't convince them. And that was true, wasn't it? Jesus raised another man named Lazarus in **John 11**, and instead of putting their faith in Jesus and repenting of their sin because of it, the Pharisees plotted to kill Him in response. And

when Jesus Himself was raised from the dead, many religious leaders and Jews still wouldn't believe on Him as the Messiah, repent of their sin and love of money, and follow Him.

*What we need to convince us to live the life God calls us to is not a special miracle or extra revelation not revealed in His Word. "If God would just do this/that or show me this/that" isn't the evidence we need. The power to change our hearts and lead us to belief, repentance, and obedience is not in seeing a miracle, but in the Word of God under the power of the Holy Spirit giving us understanding. So read it and heed it! In it, we find a crucified, risen, and forever reigning Savior of more worth than all the money in the world. A Savior worthy of leaving everything to follow.*