

## INTRODUCTION

I hope you took a moment to look at the title of this message because this morning we are going to consider two things we need that are in hell. In this passage, Jesus pulled back the veil between this world and the next and showed us there is a heaven and a hell. There are only two eternal destinies and everyone in this room will end in spending eternity in either heaven or hell.

Through the years, I've enjoyed reading epitaphs. Perhaps you've heard the story about the message one man left on his tombstone. It said, "Consider, young man, as you walk by, as you are now, so once was I. As I am now, you soon shall be, so prepare, young man to follow me." That sounded pretty profound, but one fellow took a knife and scratched a response on the tombstone that read, "To follow you is not my intent; until I know which way you went!" There are only two directions you can go after death.

People don't like to talk about hell, and frankly, I don't enjoy preaching on it. But because I'm committed to teach the full counsel of God, I am going to devote two messages to this powerful passage of scripture about heaven and hell.

There once was a little church looking for a new pastor. One Sunday they had a candidate fill the pulpit and he preached on hell. The next Sunday, another preacher came and he preached on hell as well. The congregation called the second man to serve as their pastor. When he learned the preacher before him also preached on hell, he asked a wise old man in the church why they hadn't call the first man. He replied, "When the first man preached on people going to hell, he seemed to be almost glad about it. When you preached on people going to hell, we could tell it broke your heart." As we look at this passage about heaven and hell, I pray that it will break my heart and break your heart as well.

Let's begin reading in Luke 16:19:

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus at his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

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. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'

‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’

He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

Some people call this a parable of Jesus, but I agree with many scholars who believe Jesus is describing an actual occurrence. In the 38 parables Jesus told, he never called anyone by name. In this story, He identifies two of the characters by name, Lazarus and Abraham. I believe there really was a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus and after they died Jesus reported what happened. It was *real*. You’ve heard of reality TV–this is even better, it’s reality Bible. In the next message I bring from this passage, I’ll go into a little greater detail about Lazarus, but today I want to focus on the rich man in hell. There are two things in hell we really need at Green Acres. In fact these are two things in hell every New Testament church needs.

## **I. IN HELL, THE RICH MAN LOOKED UP–WE NEED TO HAVE A VISION OF HEAVEN**

Jesus never revealed the rich man’s name, perhaps because he was someone who was well known. He is sometimes called Dives, but that’s not his name, it’s just the Latin translation of “rich man.” I suspect the rich man had a great funeral in which many dignitaries attended. Speaker after speaker related what a great, wonderful, religious man he was. He had to have been blessed by God because of all the wealth he enjoyed. I’m sure they reported he had gone on to his reward in heaven.

But one split second after the rich man died, he got the strange feeling something wasn’t right. Jesus simply said, “In hell, where he was in torment, he lifted up his eyes.” He was literally in “hades.” Hades is a place where the wicked dead go until the final sentencing to hell that takes place at the Great White Throne Judgement in Revelation 20. It’s like the county jail before the state pen; it’s a place of torment and agony just like hell. Notice two things about the agony of hell:

### **1. He saw people in heaven**

The first thing he noticed was the torment, but the next scary thing he noticed was that he could see into heaven! When the beggar Lazarus had died, it doesn’t say he was buried like the rich man. His body was probably dumped in some garbage pile. But Jesus said the angels escorted his soul into the presence of Abraham. Now if this was a theology class I would tell you Abraham’s bosom, or paradise, was where the souls of all the righteous dead went before the cross. After the cross, Jesus took these folks to heaven. But don’t get so distracted by the theological nuances that you miss the point. It’s okay to call it heaven. To every Jew, sitting down with Abraham was a by word for heaven.

People often ask me if we will recognize each other in heaven. I believe we most certainly will. The rich man looked up and recognized Lazarus and Abraham. If they can recognize us from hell, then I think we’ll recognize each other.

Forget the fire and flame. 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.

Like the rich man, we need to lift up our eyes and catch a glimpse of heaven as well. Heaven is real, and it will be populated with people. How do you get to heaven? Not by being good or doing good—nobody is good enough. You don't get to heaven by being religious. The rich man was a religious Jew. He called out to "father Abraham" and Abraham even said, "son." Father Abraham had many sons, many sons had father Abraham. I am one of them and so are you—but it won't get you into heaven. Only by being a child of God can you get into heaven! Another agony of hell was:

## **2. He could remember his life on earth**

In verse 25 Abraham said, "Son remember..." I believe those are two of the scariest words that will ever be heard in hell. People in hell will carry their memories with them. I believe a person in hell will remember every gospel message they ever heard. They will remember every time someone tried to give them a booklet explaining how to become a Christian.

Life is tough by itself, and sometimes people wish they could erase their memories like they erase a video tape. That's why so many people commit suicide: they want to erase the memories. There is no Alzheimer's in hell. Everyone will have a crystal-clear memory. Hell will be a place of eternal remembrance and regret. Have you ever bought something on a whim and later regretted it? It's called "buyer's remorse." Fortunately, you can take a lot of things back for a refund or an exchange. In hell there will be what I call "invitation remorse." It won't be over something you *did*, but it will be remorse over something you *didn't* do: accept Jesus. If you are here today without Jesus and you die in your sins, you will recall these exact words I'm speaking now. You will remember standing up in a few minutes and hearing the Spirit of God say to you, "Come just as you are..." And if you reject Jesus' free offer of eternal life you will regret if forever.

God loves you and He doesn't want you to go to hell. Hell was never intended for human habitation. Jesus said in Matthew 25:41, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Hell was designed for Satan and his demons, not people. But because of our sinfulness, we are all born with a reservation for hell. When we repent of our sins and come to Jesus, He forgives us and cancels our reservation in hell, and makes a new reservation for us in heaven. God loves you so much that Jesus died so you wouldn't spend eternity in hell.

So, the first thing in hell we need is a vision of heaven. Lift up your heads, and lift up your eyes, because our redemption is drawing nigh! There is another thing in hell we need.

## **II. IN HELL, THE RICH MAN CRIED OUT—WE NEED TO HEAR THE VOICES FROM HELL**

Did you realize there is prayer in hell? The rich man cried out to Abraham and lifted his petition to heaven. But his prayers were unanswered. Notice his two cries to heaven:

### **1. A cry of personal agony: “HELP ME!!!!”**

The rich man’s first thought was of himself and his needs. That should be no surprise, because one of the prerequisites for hell is to spend all your life thinking only of yourself and your needs. When he recognized the torment of hell, he cried out for Abraham to send Lazarus to dip his finger in some water to touch his tongue. He was in agony in the fire. That’s an interesting point about the afterlife. We will be equipped with spirit bodies that possess a sense of pain or pleasure. Lazarus had a finger and the rich man had a tongue.

I believe the thirst the rich man had was the same thirst everyone has in this life—it’s a thirst for God. This thirst cannot be satisfied with anything the world has to offer. Only Jesus can satisfy this thirst. Jesus said, “If anyone thirsty, let him come to me and drink!” (John 7:37) This thirst for God only becomes more intense and agonizing in hell.

People in our culture have made hell a joke. They think hell is going to be a place of fun, and frolicking with your friends. Some people think hell is going to be a rock and roll heaven with a hell of a band.

In a speech to the National Press Club, Ted Turner in said, “Heaven is going to be a mighty slender place. And most of the people I know in life aren’t going to be there. There are a few notable exceptions and I’ll miss them. [Laughter] Remember, heaven is going to be perfect. And I don’t really want to be there...Those of us that go to hell, which will be most of us in this room; most journalists are certainly going there. [Laughter] But, when we get to hell we’ll have a chance to make things better because hell is supposed to be a mess. And heaven is perfect. Who wants to go to a place that’s perfect? Boring. Boring.” [Laughter]

Hell is a place of outer darkness, and weeping and gnashing of teeth. It’s a place of darkness, isolation, and eternal frustration. Remember, this is not some weird prophet seeing a vision of the afterlife; this is the Lord Jesus Himself speaking plainly about what hell is like.

Abraham reported this thirst for God and the physical agony could not be relieved. There is a great chasm that is fixed permanently between heaven and hell and no person can cross it. After death, it’s too late to change your eternal destination. So his prayer for relief was unanswered.

But the main point of this message is in the next statement of the rich man. He also uttered a:

### **2. A cry of concern for his family: “WARN THEM!!!!”**

After Abraham’s reply, the rich man realizes there is no hope for himself so his thoughts turn to his family. He had five brothers, and they were all like him: religious but lost. So he says in verse 27, “I beg you, Father Abraham, send Lazarus to my house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.”

Suddenly, the rich man in hell becomes a wannabe soul winner. He develops a missionary spirit. He expresses a concern for the lost people in his family. It's too bad he didn't have that same fear of hell before he died!

There is a powerful warning here for every person who has not yet trusted Jesus to save them from their sins and hell. Abraham gives an astonishing reply to the rich man's prayer. He says his brothers have the Bible (the Law and the Prophets) that's all they need to miss hell. If they will just read it and believe it, they can be saved from hell. But the rich man insists that if a dead man could go back and talk to his brothers, *then* they would turn from their sins and they would repent. By the way, the rich man in hell *knew* how to be saved, to repent; he just never got around to repenting himself. I'm convinced thousands of people know how to be saved; they've just never *done* it. So he wants Lazarus to go back and warn his brothers to stay away from hell. When they see a man from the grave warning them, he is certain that they will repent.

I tend to agree with the rich man don't you? Imagine that I'm not a Christian and somebody knocks on my door some evening. When I open the door, I'm shocked to see an old boy whose funeral I attended a few weeks earlier standing there. He says, "I've come to talk to you about Jesus, can I come in?" After my initial shock I say, "Of course you can come in." The man begins to say, "I've just come back from heaven to especially warn you that there is a hell because your older brother is there now. He asked me to come warn you not to come to that place. So if you will admit you are a sinner, turn from your sins and trust Jesus, you can be forgiven today. Would you like to bow your head right now and receive Christ?" Something like that would literally scare the hell out of me—scare me out of hell.

But Abraham said, "If they don't believe God's Word, they won't believe if someone rises from the dead." A few weeks after He told this story to the Jews, Jesus *was* resurrected—and some still scoffed and rejected Him. Today, it's not much different. People have the Bible and Jesus *has* risen from the dead—and many still reject Him. I'm sharing the Word of God with you today, and I'm proclaiming that Jesus is alive. If that's not enough for you to want to miss hell, you wouldn't repent if a corpse came knocking on your door in person.

There's also a powerful message here for all of us who are Christians. The one thing that stands out in this passage to me is the *concern* the rich man had for his brothers. In hell, people there have a constant, chronic concern for lost people who are still alive and are headed for hell. And that's something in hell that we need, a fervent, compassionate concern for people around us who are headed toward hell.

Here's the personal application of this message. Let them ask you a very personal question: Do you have a burden for people headed for Hell? Have you shed any tears over lost people in your family or circle of friends? Have you ever stayed up all night praying for the salvation of a lost loved one who is headed for hell? I have prayed that God would give me the same kind of burden for the lost that Paul expressed in Romans 9: "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, the people of Israel... Brothers, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved." (Romans 9:2-3; 10:1)

He said he was *constantly* anguishing over the fact his Jewish brothers were not saved. His burden was so heavy he said he would be willing to forfeit his salvation and become “cursed and cut off from Christ” if it would result in the salvation of his brothers. What a burden!

As I prepared this message I was powerfully convicted because I believe dead people in hell have a heavier burden for people without Christ than I do. Sometimes I get so involved in spending time with believers and enjoying fellowship with them I forget there are people all around us who are going to hell. Could you pray, “God, you can send me to hell if it would mean that every person in Tyler would go to heaven?” I wondered this week if I could honestly pray, “Lord, I’m willing to die and go to hell if it would mean the salvation of every Chinese person.” Actually, it’s not even possible for me to be cut off from Christ, but do I have that kind of burden? Will you join me as we ask God to give us the same kind of burden that Paul had?

Let’s play “what if” for a moment. What if God offered to let you spend 30 seconds in heaven or 30 seconds in hell today, which would you choose? This is not forever; it’s just a thirty second visit. Which location do you think would make you a stronger, more mature follower of Christ? Seeing the glory and majesty of heaven would probably make you a stronger Christian. But would it give you a greater burden for lost people?

If God gave me the option of letting every member of our church spend 30 seconds in heaven in or 30 seconds in hell, I would ask God to let all of us spend just 30 seconds in hell. Because those of us who know the Lord are going to spend eternity in heaven, but I think that 30 seconds in hell would change us for the rest of our lives. If we could see the agony and hear those voices we would come back and be the most evangelistic Christians on earth. People in hell are concerned for lost people who are headed for hell. That’s something in hell we need.

A few days ago, I was in Lowe’s buying some adhesive numbers to go on our mailbox. While I was there, an announcement came over the public address system. It said, “Attention employees and shoppers, we have a code Adam. There is a three-year-old boy with dark blonde hair wearing a light blue shirt who has disappeared. Please help us look for him.” The entire store went on alert. Of course, we were all afraid someone abducted him. There was a sense of urgency and purpose as we all forgot about shopping and started searching. The police who were called were positioned at the doors. For the next few minutes, both the shoppers and the employees fanned out across the store looking in every good hiding spot. After about ten minutes the announcement was made, “Cancel Code Adam, the little boy has been found.” Then something happened at Lowe’s I’ve never experienced before: There were cheers and applause that could be heard from all parts of the store—there were smiles everywhere. I learned from one of the employees the little boy had just crawled behind one of the large displays.

After that, as I returned to my car, I thought, wouldn’t it be great at Green Acres if we had the same kind of urgency and unity to go out into this community and to search out those lost boys and girls and men and women who are headed toward an eternity without Christ?

Wouldn’t it be good if we could celebrate even more when a lost person is found for Christ? Like Jesus said in Luke 15, “there is JOY in the presence of angels over one sinner who repents.”

What in hell do we need? We need a fresh vision of heaven, and we need to have the same concern for people headed toward hell.

## OUTLINE

### I. IN HELL, THE RICH MAN LOOKED UP—WE NEED TO HAVE A VISION OF HEAVEN

1. He saw people in heaven
2. He could remember his life on earth

### II. IN HELL, THE RICH MAN CRIED OUT—WE NEED TO HEAR THE VOICES FROM HELL

1. A cry of personal agony: "HELP ME!!!!"
2. A cry of concern for his family: "WARN THEM!!!!"

### APPLICATION: DO YOU HAVE A BURDEN FOR PEOPLE HEADED FOR HELL?

"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, the people of Israel...Brothers, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved." *Romans 9:2-3; 10:1*



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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes