

## **A Message the Dead Would Love To Preach**

Luke 16:22-31 - Resurrection Sunday – April 4, 2010

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

➤ **Choosing \_\_\_\_\_ That Which Will  
Prepare Us For \_\_\_\_\_**

I Corinthians 15:17-18, 20  
Luke 13:24

➤ **A Rich Man's \_\_\_\_\_ and a Poor  
Man's \_\_\_\_\_** Luke 16:22-31

Hebrews 9:27

Romans 10:13-14  
Hebrews 4:12

Luke 12:19-21

Jeremiah 9:23-24

Matthew 4:17

➤ **Christ's Compelling \_\_\_\_\_**  
Matthew 7:13-14

Ezekiel 18:32

Matthew 11:28

II Thessalonians 1:8

John 14:6

John 20:31

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Isaiah 53:6

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Isaiah 55:6-7

I Corinthians 15:21-26

### **Wrap Up:**

#### **My NEXT STEP for This Week**

- Read John 20:1-18 at your Easter Celebration.
- Pray for fruit to come from today's message.
- Write your own Next Step on the lines below and the pastors/elders will pray for you.

## A Message the Dead Would Love To Preach

Luke 16:22-31 - Resurrection Sunday – April 4, 2010

**Intro:** I stand before you to declare – He is risen! And how appropriate it is to respond – He is risen indeed! There is no doubt, no question in our mind that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and that He rose again on the third day. His resurrection was a literal resurrection ... it was a physical resurrection – it was a bodily resurrection. We don't play around with this truth! Doubt this truth and your soul is lost. Embrace this truth and you're on the right path. If it causes your heart to rejoice to be reminded of it – you are not only on the right path – your path is leading to everlasting life.

### **1 Corinthians 15:3-8**

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

15:4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

15:5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

15:6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;

15:7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;

15:8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

Paul is clear ... that which is of first importance ... is that Christ

- ✓ Died for our sins
- ✓ That He was buried
- ✓ That He was raised on the third day

These are gospel FACTS! They are non-negotiable truths. Belief in these things is essential for salvation. Doubt these and your soul is in jeopardy!

**Transition:** Many of you here today set this day aside to come to church ... and may not attend at other times. So I want to share with you the most important thing you can ever hear – it is the gospel! God wants you to hear some good news ... but good news is really good news when we see how its connected to some terribly bad news. Let me begin by pointing out a necessity about Easter.

### ➤ **Choosing NOW That Which Will Prepare Us For THEN**

Entrance into heaven – eternal life – has much to do with what we do with the fact of the resurrection!

### **1 Corinthians 15:17-18, 20**

and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

15:18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

15:20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

The resurrection is a foundation truth ... we must embrace it and know that recognize that Christ's resurrection validated and verified everything He did on the cross. The gospel is

based on the facts ... that need to be accepted or believed. Jesus explains this in Luke 13:24. The Lord likens our reception of the gospel as entering a gate.

**Luke 13:24**

“Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.”

The gospel is this: Christ died for our sins so that we might see our sins and come to Him for forgiveness. We must choose NOW to do that which will prepare us for THEN – eternity!

The simplest way to miss having eternal life is do **NOTHING!**

- **Good intentions** will not provide any benefit
- **Admiring** Christ will not provide any benefit

A sobering truth

Most people do not receive eternal life ... do not come to God on His terms  
Few receive eternal life.

Since the door is narrow that leads to life ... and few find it – *how do you know that you've entered it?*

**Transition:** We get an answer to this question

➤ **A Rich Man's FAILURE and a Poor Man's SUCCESS**

**Transition:** I'd like us to look at the story of a man who DID NOT CHOOSE **NOW** that which would prepare Him for **THEN** – choosing what would allow him to have eternal life rather than eternal torment. Turn to Luke 16:22

**Luke 16:22-31**

“Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.

16:23 “In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.

16:24 “And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.’

16:25 “But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.

16:26 ‘And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.’

16:27 “And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house—

16:28 for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’

16:29 “But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’

16:30 “But he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’

16:31 “But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’ ”

### Preliminary observations

Jesus gave this story to point out the serious consequences of loving money – a lifestyle the religious leaders maintained. Jesus steps on their toes – angers them – because he doesn’t mix any words about this sin. But Jesus goes further and explains what a rich man in hell experiences and desires. Because Jesus mentions a person’s name, Lazarus, it is a true story – a revelation of what things are like for people after death. Jesus momentarily pulled open the veil between this world and the next and gives us a glimpse of what lies beyond the grave.

You may have heard about the epitaph that was written on a tombstone:

*Remember, Friend, as you pass by,  
As you are now, so once was I.  
As I am now, soon you shall be  
Prepare for Death, and follow me.*

But someone added the words ...

*To follow you I’m not content  
Until I know which way you went  
(Which way are you headed? Which way are you going?)*

Notice what the text says ...

**16:22a** - “*the poor man died and was carried away by the angels*”-

He probably did not have a proper burial. His body could very well have been tossed into the Valley of Gehenna the dump for Israel where fires burned continually. This is the place where they threw the bodies of the poor in that day.

**16:22b** – “*the rich man also died and was buried*”

He had a nice funeral. And he was probably well spoken of by his friends. And the preacher at the funeral probably had nice things to say about him too. But Jesus makes it perfectly clear ...

**16:22c** – “*In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment*”

The rich man went to Hades – a place of torment

### Don’t miss this

Death is separation from God; it never means **EXTINCTION**

*Why did this man go to a place of torment?*

*Was it because he was rich?*

No! It was because his riches took the place of God.

There is a link between money and spirituality. – Not merely having money ... but its importance to you.

And one of the things that plagues this country ... but is being shaken by our current recession ... is the love of money which replaces a love for God.

*Jesus is saying that man must love God and use money, instead of using God and loving money, as these Pharisees were doing. Money is not the root of all kinds of evil – the love of money is.*

How you possess your money in this world tests your preparedness for eternity. Heaven and hell are not compensation for what you go through here.

Let me clarify:

The rich man did not go to the place of torment because he was rich and the poor man didn't go to a place of comfort because he was poor. What put the rich man in a place of torment and the poor man in a place of comfort was what was in their heart. One had a devotion to money – the other had a devotion to God. The principle that determines who goes where is quite different, as we shall see as the story unfolds. *There will be many **poor** people in hell ... as there will be **rich** men in heaven.*

The place of torment was so bad that the rich man asks that Lazarus come from his place of rest ...

**16:24** – “... *that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue*”

Abraham basically says, rich man, you're getting what you deserve. In verse 27, the rich man changes his appeal!

**16:27-28** “*And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father’s house - for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’*”

For the first time the rich man has commendable feelings and desires – he has concern for his brothers.

The sad reality:

His commendable feelings and desires only add to his torment

*"The torment of the dead is that they cannot warn the living*

Dr. Helmut Thielicke

Those in torment in a heart beat would preach the gospel to their family if granted the opportunity!

There is great irony in this story:

A beggar becomes rich and a rich man becomes a beggar.

We discover

- Both the man in paradise and the man in torment are fully **CONSCIOUS**

The rich man is conscious of his condition and his failure.  
Lazarus is conscious of his happiness and joy ...

- The man in torment knows what his brothers must do to make it to heaven

**16:30**

“But he said ... if someone goes to them from the dead, they will *repent!*”

Notice the key word:

***REPENT!***

He knows he didn't repent!

He knows now that repentance is one of the key conditions to avoid hell.

He knows now that to be made right with God – there needs to be a change of attitudes towards sin.

**Hebrews 9:27**

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment

*My friends, there is no such place as purgatory. There is no intermediate place.*

What we discover in this story

- ✓ The man in torment has **memories** of **what could have been**
- ✓ Though in torment he has **concern** for his **family**
- ✓ The rich man is **suffering terribly**

Even people in hell continue to have desires and memories and reasonings

- ✓ People in hell long for relief
- ✓ But they will not be comforted
- ✓ They cannot leave their torment
- ✓ They have absolutely no hope

**Transition:** This is a very sobering reality ... but there is good news! If you are in the same category as the rich man – a sinner! Since you are still alive– there is hope for you. And the rich man even helps us understand where the hope is by the question he asks:

**Luke 16:29-30**

“But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’

16:30 “But he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’”

What comes to light ...

Someone coming back from the dead is not something that will transform a man's heart! Another Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, rose from the dead ... and a group of people immediately used it as an opportunity to seek Christ's death.

I think we all can agree ...

We love the spectacular! We love drama. We like shock treatment. But Jesus in our story makes it clear ... the spectacular and great drama do not penetrate the heart or bring about transformation!

Seeing someone come back from the dead might knock one out of their senses ... but it won't knock anyone out of their sins.

It's not a miracle that will transform our hearts ... it is something else.

**Luke 16:31**

“But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.

At first glance this seems quite negative ... but there is something quite positive and refreshing in what Jesus is saying. He is saying that the power to bring about repentance and belief in Christ is not miracles – it is the Word of God – hearing the preaching of God's Word. God's power to change lives is more abundant right now than having a miracle take place.

**Romans 10:13-14**

for “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

10:14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

I have the distinct privilege of preaching God's Word knowing that God's Word penetrates the heart! I have no skills in this. It is the Spirit of God who uses the Word of God to awaken you to your need for Him. And I have no doubt that there are some hard hearts in this room. But I also have no doubt that God's Word is convicting some of you here right now.

**Hebrews 4:12**

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Listen carefully ...

Life after death is a certainty!

The moment you die you will either be with Christ or you will be in a place of torment.

YOU get to CHOOSE your final destination!

One of the things we learn from this story is this

If the lost could come back, they would preach the gospel to us!

**Application**

This is a depressing story unless we realize that **we** are the five brothers that are left behind. This is an important point – the whole point.

You may be going through life thinking that enjoying life is why you exist.

You may be thinking – money is not the only thing – it's everything!

You may have the mindset -

- ✓ *My happiness is the most important thing in life.*
- ✓ *I'll enjoy life now.*
- ✓ *And when the next life comes ... I'll deal with it then.*

Compare: A rich farmer in Luke 12 thought the same about his riches... and said to his soul

**Luke 12:19-21**

“... Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.” ’

12:20 “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’

12:21 “So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Jesus wants us to be rich in the following ...

**Jeremiah 9:23-24**

Thus says the Lord, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches;

9:24 but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me ...

God used Moses to give us the Law – God’s perfect standard. And that perfect standard condemns us! But God used Moses to instruct us in the sacrifices ... a means to cover our sin until the Messiah came. And when Jesus the Messiah came ... He was perfectly clear in saying

**Matthew 4:17**

"... Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

**Transition:** We return to a theme I mentioned earlier. An invitation to enter a narrow door ... and now an invitation to enter a narrow gate. Turn to Matthew 7:13. For what we see next is ...

## ➤ **Christ’s Compelling OFFER**

**Matthew 7:13-14**

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.

7:14 “For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

This pastor’s desire ...

That you be one of the few who find the way to life!

Appeal ...

*Why should you be one who takes the gate that is wide that leads to destruction?*

*Why do you have to be with the many who enter through it?*

*Listen to what God says ...*

**Ezekiel 18:32**

“For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,” declares the Lord God.

“Therefore, repent and live.”

*Why not choose the narrow gate that leads to life?*

*Why not be one of the few ... like many others here today ... who have chosen the narrow gate?*

*Jesus extends an invitation ...*

**Matthew 11:28**

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

But understand the consequences if you do not come to Christ as a sinner in need of forgiveness.

**II Thessalonians 1:8**

dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

1:9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power

Here is the gospel ...

**John 14:6**

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

The only means to eternal life is through the Lord Jesus Christ!  
Jesus is not one way among many. He is the only way!

The Apostle John said ...

**John 20:31**

“... these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

What God does with our sins ...

**II Corinthians 5:21**

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

**Isaiah 53:6**

All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

Sometimes people ask ...

*Why is it so hard to believe?*

*Why doesn't God do more?*

*Why doesn't He open the heavens and speak to us?*

*Why doesn't He perform miracles again or send an angel to speak to us?*

My friends ... God has provided plenty of information ... plenty of knowledge ... for us to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is our hard hearts ... our rebellion and our sin that keeps us from Christ.

But for many of you ... God is working in your heart this very moment!

When is the best time to repent of your sins and to trust in Christ alone for your salvation?

**Hebrews 4:7**

He again fixes a certain day, "Today," ... "Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts."

Today is the best time ... don't wait for a miracle – believe now!

**Isaiah 55:6-7**

Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.

55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the Lord, And He will have compassion on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

*Sinner, call upon the Lord. He is never more near than when you hear the gospel!  
He is inviting you right now to call upon Him for forgiveness and salvation.*

**Transition:** What makes the gospel so precious to those who have already believed ... is the assurance of what the resurrection provides ...

**I Corinthians 15:21-26**

For since by a man {Adam} came death, by a man {the Lord Jesus} also came the resurrection of the dead.

15:22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

15:23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

15:24 then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

15:25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

15:26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

**Wrap Up:**

Every single one of us are fortunate to be alive today ... so that we might learn through Moses and the prophets – the realities of life.

The realities of what lies beyond ... where we are headed.

Jesus drew aside the veil between this world and the next.

He gave us a glimpse to see what is beyond, and to see the intimate relationship between the here and the hereafter.

He had the ability to do this ... for He is the author of life ... He is the giver of life ... He is the One who paid for our sins on the cross. And He is the risen Lord – One with power over life and death!

TO HIM BE THE GLORY AND HONOR FOREVER! AMEN!