

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 9/20/92
Luke 16:19-31 "Life Beyond the Grave"

Intro:

Quote: "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die."

Bumper Sticker: "He who dies with the most toys wins."

Commercial: "You only go around once in life, so grab for all the gusto..."

Q: What about life beyond the grave?

I want to tell you. You won't see that advertised on TV commercials!

New Series:

For the next couple of weeks, I want us to ponder this question. What will life be like beyond the grave? There's only one place we can look to find accurate, absolute answers to that question--God's Word. I invite you to dig into God's Word as we explore this great subject. We will but tap the surface of the depths of the great things God has in store. This is a study of ETERNAL importance.

Tonight--"The Hope of Heaven" John 14:1-4

Next Sun--"The Best Is Yet to Come: The New Heaven and Earth" Rev 21:1-5

Following Sunday morning--"The Horror of Hell" Revelation 21:5-8

Q: Why engage in a study like this?

Our Goal: Simply stated, this--I am asking that God would use this series to stimulate our thinking, to prompt us to dig into the Scriptures to find out what things are in store beyond the grave...for those who love Him, and for those who have rejected Him.

What can we expect beyond the grave? Jesus told us...

Proposition: Jesus told a story about a Rich man and a beggar named Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. He made one truth perfectly clear about the life to come. We want to see that truth this morning. Here it is. When it comes to the life to come, there are 2 alternatives. Two, and only two.

I. Two Men (19-21)

A. A Rich Man

B. Lazarus

II. Two Destinations (22-26)

A. The Hope of Heaven

B. The Horror of Hell

III. One Critical Choice (27-31)

Setting:

Before we look into the story itself, it's critical that we probe into the background. Why did Jesus tell this episode? What led up to it?

1. A Parable about the Proper Use of Money (16:1-13)

V 13 "No servant can serve two masters...You can't serve God and money."

Quote: The "Wall Street Journal" quoted an anonymous wit who defined money as "an article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven, and as a universal provider for everything except happiness." (Wiersbe)

There's nothing inherently evil about money. But money is like a barometer that reveals the condition of your soul. Jesus announced that a person's attitude towards money is a black and white indicator of his attitude towards God.

What is impossible? To have 2 masters in life--God and Money.

Next Luke gives us an intriguing footnote in the narrative. Don't miss it.

V 14 "And the Pharisees also, who were covetous...derided Him."

2. The Problem of the Pharisees (16:14-18)

The Pharisees had 2 problems. What did Luke say they were in v 14?

a) They were "covetous."--greedy

Now don't misread this. They were no Donald Trumps. The Pharisees were nice guys in Jewish society. They gave a lot of money to charity. They donated a lot of time to organized religion. They did good things. But they had wrong motives.

Illust:

b) They derided Jesus. (lit. "to turn up the nose," Morgan, 189)

The Pharisees despised Jesus. They mocked Him. Why? Because He stepped on their toes. He told them the truth. About themselves. Don't miss this. The reason Jesus told the story we're about to study is because he was confronted with people whose master passion in life was material possession.

Key Belief of Pharisees: If a man is religious and rich, he must be righteous. Material Prosperity was proof of Righteous conduct. Wealth is a sign of God's favor. Poverty is a sign of His displeasure.

Q: Is that true?

Illust: Health and Wealth Gospel today...

In that context, Jesus told His listeners a story...

I. Two Men (19-21)

Vv 19-21 "There was a certain rich man who was clothed..."

I want to warn you. This is a staggering story. If you'll listen carefully, it will rattle your cage! It's a story about 2 men in Jesus' day (a parable? If so, only parable that uses an actual name. And even if it is, that does not discredit the validity of what Jesus says about the life to come). But it could be written about 2 men in our day as well. Because it represents 2 types of men. Keep this in mind. In God's eyes, there are only 2 types of men.

A. A Rich Man

Q: What do you notice about the rich man?

1. "Dives"--Latin for "rich"

2. Clothed in purple and fine linen--that's what the High Priests wore; very expensive (a GQ dresser!)

3. Fared "sumptuously"--the greek word simply means "brilliantly."

Used here, it does not suggest a brilliance that was admirable, but merely that the rich man put on a brilliant display. Another word--FLAMBOYANT.

This guy had it made! He feasted in luxury how often? "every day"

The word used indicates his feasting was a gourmet feeding. Every day he ate exotic and costly dishes. Every day!

It's quite likely that this guy violated the fourth commandment. What does it say? No work on the Sabbath. What else? "Six days you shall labor." (Ex 20:9) Listen. Work is not bad. In fact, God commanded Adam to work even before the fall! He established the pattern--6 days work, 1 day rest. This rich man had it all turned around.

Illust: So does our society...4 day work weeks, so we can play more...

Now there's nothing wrong with enjoying a good meal. But in a country where common people were fortunate if they ate meat once a week, and where they worked their tails off 6 days to make ends meet, here's a guy self-indulging.

There's the first man. The Rich man.

Notice something. We're not told this man was guilty of any vulgar sin. In fact, he probably made the top 100 list of the most admired men of Palestine that year. He was wealthy, powerful, no doubt popular, fun to be with, threw great parties, successful, influential. He was all of that. That's not to be denied.

But this man forgot something. While he lived, he accumulated all the "stuff" this life has to offer. Life was pure pleasure for him. But here's what he forgot. He forgot that there was a life to come.

Illust:

B. Lazarus

V 20 "And there was a certain beggar..."

What are we told about Lazarus?

1. Lazarus was a Beggar.

He was a pauper on life's highway. No doubt, an embarrassment to his society. Apparently, he was physically handicapped and unable to work for a living. He "was laid" at the gate. He was "full of sores." There was no welfare system. There was no family to supply his needs. So he begged. This does not endorse scrounging, and laziness. He begged because he couldn't work. There was no alternative.

Note: I read in William Barclay's commentary that in that day, there were no forks, knives, or napkins. People ate their food with their hands. In wealthy houses, a man would clean his hands by wiping them on hunks of bread, which were then thrown away. That's what Lazarus ate.

I can't help but make this connection. The rich man did not commit any overt sin. He didn't kick the beggar at his doorstep. He didn't badmouth him. He didn't tell him to get lost. He just IGNORED him. He lived as though he didn't exist. Friends, that's the epitome of self-centeredness. Do we ever do that? By the way we don't prove our compassion for needy people merely by giving them things we don't want anyway! (give to Salv'n Army)

Illust:

Lazarus was forced to beg, and eat scraps, literally. But realize something else.

2. Lazarus was a Godly man.

How do we know that? The next scene in the story makes that clear. But quite possibly, so does his very name. "Lazarus" in Hebrew means "God the Helper." Who was Lazarus's helper in life? God was!

You say, "It doesn't sound like He helped him very well. Looks to me like God shafted him." The reason we feel that way is because we have tunnel vision. The rest of the story is beyond the grave. In fact, this life isn't really even the story. It's the prologue! The preface! Lazarus knew that there was life beyond the grave.

Hymn: "It Will be worth it all..."

Hymn: "Turn your eyes upon Jesus...and the things of this earth..."

Tran: There are two men in this story. There are 2 kinds of people in this world, and

II. Two Destinations (22-26)

There's more to the story than meets the eye. It's appointed unto man once to die (Heb 9:27). For the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). Wherefore by one man (Adam) sin entered the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for all have sinned (Rom 5:12).

It's a fact of life. You can bank on this statistic, "One out of every one people in this world die." So in Jesus' story, both men died. What happened next?

V 22 "And it came to pass"

Both died. But watch the difference between what happened after their death.

1. Lazarus was carried by angels to heaven.
2. The Rich man died and was buried.

What a contrast! Lazarus died. The kindest deed ever done to him in life was the act of dogs that licked his sores. And when he died, there is no mention that anyone was there to mourn. No funeral service. We're not even told Lazarus was buried. It's probable he wasn't. Outside of Jerusalem, there was a place called Gehenna. Acc to commentator G. Campbell Morgan, unknown and unclaimed beggars were carried there, and flung into the fires. Think of it. When Lazarus died, someone picked up his soreinfested body and just disposed of it.

On the other hand, what did they do with the rich man? He was "buried" (22). I would like to know what his funeral cost! No doubt scores of people paid tribute. No doubt his eulogy was impressive.

Tragic: A lot of lies are tossed around at funeral services...

You say, "What a tragic ending!" Listen. We're not at the end of the story! There's life beyond the grave. There are 2 destinations.

A. Lazarus enjoyed The Hope of Heaven.

V 22 "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom"

I hope you'll come back tonight. Read John 14:1-4 before you do. The entire message will be on the Hope of Heaven.

Let me whet your appetite now. Heaven is a wonderful place! It's interesting how little the Bible really says about what it will be like.

Illust: Like telling your child you've got a surprise waiting

Here Jesus says Lazarus was carried to "Abraham's bosom." That is, he went to be with Abraham. Why is that significant? Who was Abe? God established an eternal cov't with Abe. Through Abe's seed, the Messiah came into the world. What did Abe do?

Gen 15:6 Abe "believed in the Lord; He counted it to Him for righteousness."

There are only 2 kinds of people in the world. Those that believe in the Lord. Those that don't. Those that have the imputed righteousness of Christ. And those that don't. Lazarus believed. Lazarus was declared righteous. So Lazarus joined company with Abe and the rest of God's people.

Abe's bosom is the place of paradise (Lk 23:43 "...Today you will be with me in paradise."). What's paradise like? I don't know for sure, but listen to Paul in II Cor 12:4 "He was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

Lazarus experienced the Hope of Heaven. That's the first destination.

B. The Rich man suffered The Horror of Hell.

V 23 "And in hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments..."

Q: Where did the rich man go? "hades"

Q: What is "hades"? Often translated "hell." In Jesus' day, hades was understood as the underworld, the place of the departed spirits. Mentioned 11 times in NT, 61 in LXX. Here it refers to that dreadful abode of the unsaved dead.

Hades is the temporary realm of the dead. A holding pen for those waiting the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11-15). One day every unbelieving person will stand before the Judge, Jesus Christ. And death and hell will be cast in the Lake of Fire.

Note: No such thing as "soul sleep" for either Lazarus or the Rich man. Beyond the grave, both are conscious and alert. One enjoys comfort. The other suffers torment.

Quote: C.S. Lewis was told about a gravestone inscription: "Here lies an atheist--all dressed up and no place to go." Lewis quietly replied, "I bet he wishes that were so!"

Q: What is hell like?

1. A Place of Torment (23, 24, 25, 28)

The word is used 4 times in this account. It speaks of definite pain.

2. A Place of No Relief (24-26)
3. A Place of Regret

Later we'll hear the Rich man's words of regret. "I blew it! It's too late now!"

Q: Why are we so flipant about hell?

eg--swear words (I remember when I was in Jr. Hi watching a boy get picked on, and out of fury yell, "Go to hell!" He had no idea what he was saying!)

Key: Satan is perfectly content when modern, enlightened people like us argue about the existance of a literal hell.

Quote: I read an article (Martin Marty), "In much of contemporary Christianity hell has disappeared and no one noticed. If Christians really believed in hell, they wouldn't be watching basketball or even the TV preachers. They'd be out rescuing people."

Tran: What does the Bible say about Life beyond the Grave? 2 men. 2 destinations.

III. One Critical Choice (27-31)

Have you ever heard someone say, "I don't mind if I go to hell. My friends will be there. I'll have a lot of company." Will hell be an eternal New Year's eve party, with good ole boys having a good ole time?

Listen to the rich man. There is no friendship or company in hell. Only torment and isolation and loneliness.

It was too late for the rich man, so what did he ask of Abraham?
Vv 27-28 "...I pray thee..."

Send Lazarus to warn my 5 brothers! Did he? No. Why not?
Vv 29-31 "Abe said..."

Q: Why did Jesus say people go to hell?

1. They reject the Scriptures (29).
2. They reject the Savior (31).

The rich man went to hell because he refused to acknowledge the truth of God's Holy Word. So inevitably did his brothers. And so do people today...

Illust:

Objection: "How can a loving God even permit such a place as hell to exist, let alone send people there?"

When we ask that question, we are revealing our ignorance of 2 things--The Love of God, and the Wickedness of sin. Wiersbe is right, "God's love is a holy love, not a shallow sentiment, and sin is rebellion against a holy and loving God. God does not send people to hell. They send themselves there by refusing to heed His call and believe in His Son."

Key: Lazarus didn't go to heaven because he was poor. The rich man didn't go to hell because he was rich. No. What made the eternal difference between these 2 men? It boils down to this. One trusted his life to God. The other didn't.

It wasn't primarily what the Rich man did that sent him to hell. It was what he did NOT do. He did not love God. And he did not love his fellowman. He merely loved himself.

Illust:

Jesus asked a question in Mk 8:36 "For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" How would you answer it?

Q: Do you know for sure what life will hold for you beyond the grave?

Jesus made this perfectly clear. There are 2 types of people, 2 destinations, and one choice.