

WEEKLY DEVOTIONS AT GLENKIRK



The DEVO

SERMON
SERIES

THE
STORIES
HE
TOLD

OCTOBER 15 - 19, 2018

MONDAY

Luke 16:19-21

Agree or disagree: How Christians spend their money says a lot about what they believe about God.

The Lord Jesus has been speaking and teaching with the crowds, among whom are the Pharisees (Luke 12-16). They are not pleased with what they have seen and heard from Jesus. Jesus uses this parable (Luke 16:19-31) to illustrate the root sin of the scoffing Pharisees (v. 15). Jesus said, *“You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts.”* Jesus adds that as the keepers of the Law, the Pharisees are its corrupters.

Jesus begins this parable with the rich man. He had it made! He had wealth and a happy life. But Lazarus, he was opposite by every appearance. Failing to name the rich man is typical in Jesus’ parables, and the naming of Lazarus is unique. This name means “the one God helps.” And appropriately so!

I will honestly say I am drawn to wanting and enjoying the material wealth God has afforded us. I have a very good life. This parable causes me to evaluate my own heart and seek changes.

The Pharisee would have supposed the rich man (by a superficial reading of Deuteronomy 28) to be a righteous man. They could identify with this

man and believed he was Heaven bound. Lazarus, the Pharisees supposed by all appearances, was the opposite. He was impoverished, sickly, and a dependent beggar. He was the type of person the Pharisees would label a “sinner,” a man worthy of hell.

Jesus has set the scene perfectly. These two men, so opposite in appearance, lived in close proximity to each other. Lazarus longed for the crumbs from the rich man’s table (v. 21). And if Lazarus was painfully aware of the rich man’s bounty, but not a sharer in them, so, too, the rich man had to have been aware of the pathetic plight of Lazarus. He would have had to walk past Lazarus every time he left or entered his house. That means he had to have consciously chosen to ignore his need. The rich man used his wealth to indulge himself, but not to minister to the needy. This is a clear violation of the Old Testament standard of righteousness. Do I do this? I know I often walk past the homeless men at the grocery store.

Like the rich man, the Pharisees were living the good life, assuming they would go to Heaven. But their love of money and trappings of power blinded them to what God wanted of them, of all of us. The Law and the Prophets state in Deuteronomy 6:5, *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”*

TUESDAY

Luke 16:19-31

A man on an ocean liner was leaning over the ship's rail, tossing something in the air and catching it. A passerby asked, "What are you tossing?" "A diamond of great value," replied the man. "It is all that I have in this world." "Aren't you afraid of losing it, tossing it over the open water like that?" asked the passerby. "No," the man casually answered. "I've been doing this for the past hour, and I've caught it every time." "But there might be a last time," warned the passerby. The man laughed and tossed it again, but this time he missed. For a moment he stood astonished. The man then cried out in despair, "Lost! Lost! Lost!"

Do you find this story absurd? Would people risk something of such great value in such a cavalier manner? Yes! If you consider the ocean is eternity and they are on the vessel of life. The diamond is their soul. If they do not know Christ as their Savior, they are taking a great risk that every day will be their last on this earth. If they should die without Him, they would be eternally lost.

Jesus directs the parable of the rich man and Lazarus to the Pharisees, who thought they would get into Heaven (eternal blessing) because they were good men and religious leaders. But their religion was outward. The Pharisees' religious practice was impressive. But God was not impressed because their hearts were full of pride and hypocrisy (Luke

16:15). Like the rich man in the parable, they were living the good life, assuming that Heaven was surely in their future. But their love of money blinded them to God's perspective. Like the man who tossed the diamond into the air and lost it, unless the Pharisees repented and obeyed the true message of the Law and Prophets (pointing to Christ), they would be eternally lost.

The rich man in this parable is not guilty of any gross sin. His fault was in living for himself and for this life only, with no view of eternity. His sin was not having money; after all, Abraham was a wealthy man. His sin was that he did not use the wealth given him by God to lay up treasures in Heaven even though the opportunity was literally laid at his doorstep every day. Even having Abraham as his father (vv. 24, 27, 30) wouldn't help him on Judgment Day, because he had neglected the true message of Moses and the Prophets. His faith was superficial and did not result in obedience.

No one sets out determined to be careless about their eternal destiny. But we get so caught up with the good things of this life that we neglect thinking about the life to come. Every so often—when a loved one or friend dies or when a major catastrophe claims many lives—we think about death. But many will quickly put eternal decisions out of their mind, returning to the urgent demands of the here and now. However, this parable teaches that since present choices determine eternal destiny, we must repent and believe God's Word and not be deceived by outward appearances.

WEDNESDAY

Luke 16:23-31

If the rich man were to post a Yelp review about hell, what would he say?

O Stars!! Hell is a place of torment!

O Stars!! The service was non-existent. Worse, when I asked for water, none was ever coming!

O Stars!! I was alone and in agony in the fire!!

O Stars!! Alone, no moving to a better place, ever!!

O Stars!! Warn everyone to repent!! I want my five brothers to NEVER come here!

Hell is the place of eternal punishment for the unrighteous. Jesus repeatedly spoke about hell (Hades, Sheol, Gehenna, outer darkness, lake of fire burning with brimstone). Because of the symbolic nature of the language used in the Bible, some people question whether hell consists of such actual fire. But this reasoning cannot bring comfort to the nonbeliever. The reality is greater than the symbol. The Bible exhausts human language in describing Heaven and hell. The former is more glorious and the latter more terrible than language can express.

“So I can honestly say that to the degree that you and I struggle with the concept of hell and eternal punishment is the degree to which we don’t understand God’s holiness and honor on the one hand, or the horror and depravity of mankind’s sin on the other.” Sam Storms, Crosswalk.com

All joking about Yelp aside, when I read about hell and eternal punishment, there is a feeling of deep agony in my heart. Who of us does not have a friend or loved one who does not believe in Jesus for salvation?

This should provoke within us both anguish and urgent commitment to share the Gospel with those who remain in unbelief.

The other reaction I have is one of unfathomable gratitude! When I read about hell in a passage like Revelation 14:9-11, I’m reading about what I deserve. God would have been perfectly just and righteous had He chosen to leave me to eternal torment. But in MERCY, He has drawn me to faith in His Son. In His MERCY He poured His wrath on Jesus in my place, a wrath and judgment that Jesus lovingly and willingly embraced and endured. God owes us nothing but justice. The fact that God has given us mercy instead, and forgiveness instead of condemnation, should awaken in us the deepest heartfelt gratitude and praise.

Bible verses on hell:

Psalms 9:17; Proverbs 15:11, 24; 23:14; Matthew 5:29-30; 10:28; 13:42,50; 25:41-46; Mark 9:43; Luke 16:23-27; Acts 2:27; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:7; Revelation 19:8; 20:13-14; 21:8

THURSDAY

Luke 16:22

In C.S. Lewis' *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, a ship sails east in search of lost countrymen and new adventures. But the heart of one passenger, Reepicheep the valiant mouse, is steadfastly set on a greater adventure. He has one destination in mind: Aslan's country.

From his youth, Reepicheep was taught in a poem that one day he would journey to the Far East and find what he'd always longed for:

*Where sky and water meet,
Where the waves grow sweet,
Doubt not, Reepicheep,
To find all you seek,
There in the utter East.*

After reciting the poem to his shipmates, Reepicheep says, "I do not know what it means. But the spell of it has been on me all my life."

Late in the journey, when they have sailed farther than anyone on record, Reepicheep is thrown into the sea. To his surprise, the water tastes sweet. His excitement is unrestrainable. He's so close to Aslan's country; he can literally taste it.

Earlier in the voyage, Reepicheep had expressed his utter abandonment to the cause of seeking Aslan's country. "While I can, I sail east in the Dawn Treader. When she fails me, I paddle east in my coracle. When

she sinks, I shall swim east with my four paws. And when I can swim no longer, if I have not reached Aslan's country, or shot over the edge of the world in some vast cataract, I shall sink with my nose to the sunrise."

I want to have this same abandonment to the quest for Heaven: to see Jesus face to face. We can identify with Reepicheep's glorious quest because the spell of Heaven has been on us all our lives, even if we have sometimes confused it with lesser desires. At the end of the *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Reepicheep's traveling companions watch as he disappears over the horizon. Does he make it to Aslan's country? In the final book of the Narnia series, we discover the answer, which confirms what we already know in our hearts.

Five months before he died, C.S. Lewis wrote to a woman who feared that her own death was imminent. Lewis said, "Can you not see death as a friend and deliverer? What is there to be afraid of? Your sins are confessed better things ahead than any we leave behind ... Our Lord says to you, 'Peace, child, peace. Relax. Let go. I will catch you. Do you trust me so little?' ... Of course, this may not be the end. Then make it a good rehearsal." Lewis signed the letter, "Yours (and like you, a tired traveler, near the journey's end)."

We see life differently when we realize that death isn't a wall but a turnstile, a small obstacle that marks a great beginning. Calvin Miller put it this way:

*I once scorned every fearful thought of death,
When it was but the end of pulse and breath.
But now my eyes have seen that past the pain
There is a world that's waiting to be claimed.
Earthmaker, Holy, let me now depart,
For living's such a temporary art.
And dying is but getting dressed for God,
Our graves are merely doorways cut in sod.*

FRIDAY

Luke 16:22; 1 Peter 3:15

One of the best ways to understand something that's difficult to grasp, like basic truths of the Christian faith, is to be able to explain it to a child. While reading a book about planets and stars, my 5-year-old grandson asked, "Is that Heaven where Jesus lives?" Great question!

"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

Because we want to set children's hearts and our own on Heaven, I want to give a quick answer to five questions most gospel investigators of any age want to know. Remember, if someone is asking questions about Heaven that you are not sure how to answer, don't be afraid to quickly call on the Holy Spirit to help. And when you're really stuck, it's a great time to say, "I'm not sure; let's look in the Bible together." Kids don't need us to have all the answers. They want to have a safe place to ask and explore together.

Question 1: What is Heaven like? *John 14:2*

Jesus describes Heaven as a place He is preparing for us! We don't know exactly what Heaven looks like. God wants us to trust that Heaven will be a wonderful place because He is responsible for all of it! We can be sure it will be free of sadness (Revelation 21:4) and full of joy (Psalms 16:11).

Question 2: Does everyone go to Heaven? *John 3:16*

The Bible is clear we must believe in Jesus and accept His gift in order to have eternal life in Heaven. This is why it is so important to tell others about God's love and what Jesus did for us on the cross. We should share the Good News, and then the rest is between God and the individual. When we accept God's gift, we can be sure in knowing we'll enjoy a place with God in Heaven for all time. What a joy that will be!

Question 3: Will we look the same in Heaven?

Luke 24:39; 1 Corinthians 15:42-49; 2 Corinthians 5:1-3

God promises us new bodies that are like Jesus' resurrected body. Will we levitate and pass through solids? We'll see.

Question 4: Will we see grandma (or grandpa or...) in Heaven?

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

Paul wrote to Christians who were grieving the death of loved ones. He wanted to share what would happen to those who die so that we can grieve the loss with the hope of seeing our family members and friends again one day in Heaven! We don't know what our relationships will be like there, but we know that God loves us so much. He will not keep us from experiencing the joy of those we love.

Question 5: What will we do in Heaven? *1 Corinthians 2:9*

Too often we think of Heaven as a place where people wear robes and play harps floating on clouds, or we sit through endless church services. Those don't sound very inviting! Instead, an accurate picture of Heaven is one of adventure, variety, and creativity. But we do know that we will rule with Him over the New Heaven and New Earth.



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