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The Gospel of Luke / Luke 16:19–31

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## Introduction

- <https://www.npr.org/2023/10/11/1205280562/104-woman-dies-skydiving-record> - Died not knowing if she achieved the record - Died with uncertainty
- None of us want to die with uncertainty or regrets. Did I do enough? Did I accomplish enough?
- The hope for followers of Jesus - You can die with certainty of eternal life. So what if you don't accomplish all of your goals and dreams? You can KNOW that you will be with Jesus forever.
- A familiar parable that reminds us that an eternal destiny awaits every person - an eternity of torment or an eternity of joy with Christ.
- We talk about eternal life a lot, but we should never tire of talking about eternal life. Eternal life in Christ is the hope we hold on to that compels us in the present to live by faith.
- Big idea from this familiar parable: The direction of your heart will determine your final destination. Right now, your heart is aimed in a direction - aimed at knowing God and living for His Kingdom OR aimed at living for yourself.
- You will live life in one of two ways: "Lord, your will be done." Or, "My will be done." If the direction of your heart is, "My will be done," you can be certain that your final destination is eternity apart from God.

- As we look at this story and think about the direction of our hearts, I want to show you two results of a heart that is set on anything but God.

## Story

- Series of parables interrupted by Jesus directly speaking to Jesus after the Pharisees scoff him.
- Now, another parable, directed at the Pharisees because of their love for money. As religious as they appeared, their hearts not directed towards God. Instead, hearts directed toward wealth.
- Jesus setting up a stark contrast between two very different people. On the one hand, a rich man dressed in purple and fine linen. In ancient world, anything purple was expensive because of costly dye used to make purple garments (Lydia in Acts). Rich man - lavish feasts every day. A man who flaunts his wealth. In NT times, extravagant wealth was a sign of the blessing of God.
- Pharisees wealth was a sign they were blessed by God. Jesus is about to squash their bad theology.
- Poor man - If poor, NOT blessed by God. BUT, cursed by God. BUT... this poor man has a name, *Lazarus*. Only parable where a character in the story is named. Lazarus = God help me. Lazarus treated as if he was unknown and insignificant by the rich man, but Lazarus was known and significant to God.
- The way the rich man treated Lazarus is an indictment on how the Pharisees treated outcasts of society - with no care or compassion.
- Lazarus sat at the gates of the rich man's luxurious home hoping to eat from the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Instead of food, the man got dogs licking his sores. Image supposed to gross us out. In Jesus' day, dogs were not domesticated animals but unclean pests.

- The reversal that the Pharisees did not expect: the poor man died and rich man both died. Lazarus carried off by angels to Abraham's side while the rich man died and went to the place of the dead.
- Lazarus did not go to Abraham's side because he was poor. Only enter eternity through faith, but in the days of Jesus, it was people like Lazarus who were clinging to Jesus by faith. Wealthy people like the Pharisees were rejecting Jesus.
- This is a parable - Jesus using metaphorical language to describe the afterlife of Lazarus and the rich man. This passage is NOT the final word about eternity but helps us to think about the reality of eternity. BUT, what IS being described is intermediate state - a place of the unsaved and a place for the children of God awaiting final resurrection and judgment.
- The point: Lazarus is cared for in a way that he was not cared for by others on the earth. At Abraham's side - intimacy - think of John laying his head on the chest of Jesus at the Lord's Supper. Abraham = founding father of the Jewish people.
- Rich man - tormented in the place of the dead. Rich man aware of his torment AND aware of Lazarus' joy and comfort. vs. 24 - Cries out for mercy but there is none.
- This is a story - but Jesus show us a coming reality for all who reject Him. Eternity is coming, and eternity will be hell for those who reject Jesus. In eternal hell, there will be no mercy.
- AND... In eternal torment, notice that the rich man isn't changed. He's still the same - he wants mercy for sure, but he doesn't want repentance. He doesn't confess his sin. He doesn't ask for a second chance for himself. Instead, he's bossing Abraham around and requesting that Lazarus serve him!

- People who suffer eternal torment will see the error of their ways, but punishment for their rebellion will not soften their hearts. They will remain hardened towards God.
- vs. 25 - Lazarus receiving his reward while rich man receiving his punishment. While the rich man can see Abraham and Lazarus, he cannot go to Abraham, and Lazarus cannot go to him. Both of their fates are settled.
- BUT... the rich man, while unrepentant, doesn't want his brothers to experience the torment he experiences. Still bossing Lazarus around: "Send him to my brothers..." Abraham: "The Word of God is enough...." (HUGE statement. We'll come back to it.) Rich man: "BUT if someone goes from the dead, they will repent." Abraham: "No they won't."
- **It's a simple story with a simple point: The direction of your heart will determine your final destination.**
- Simple question: what direction is your heart aimed? For the Pharisees, it was love of money. On the outside, every sign of devotion to God, but the real love of their heart was money. What about you? What's the real love of your heart? Wealth? Career? Accomplish all you can? Make a name for yourself? Do whatever it takes to live a life of ease? OR... is the direction of your heart pointed toward Jesus? To know Him and love Him?
- If the direction of your heart is aimed anywhere other than the God who loves you, your final destination will be eternal torment because you will end up living a life of rebellion against God.
- And... if the direction of your heart is aimed anywhere other than the God who loves you, you will see two results in the here and now that should serve as a warning that you may be on the way to a final destination of eternal torment.

## A heart set on anything but God will produce relational emptiness.

- A heart set on anything but God will always say, “My will be done...” If that’s the attitude of your heart, you’re going to end up doing a lot of relational damage.
- The story: a rich man with an opportunity to help - but doesn’t because he’s so obsessed with self. True of the Pharisees, and true of some of us.
- Some of us so obsessed with self that we are a hurt to others instead of a blessing.
- Do you answer “yes” to any of these questions?
  - **Do you regularly ignore the needs of others?** You see neediness as an inconvenience to what you want out of life.
  - **Do you want people to serve you?** People as a means to get what you want out of life instead of a desire for you to serve others.
  - **Do you have a long line of broken relationships?** Broken marriage? Broken relationships with children? Family members? Friends? Maybe a long line of broken relationships is evidence of self-centeredness - your unwillingness to forgive, your tendency to become quick to be angry and bitter towards others.
  - **Do you walk in intimacy with Jesus?** Do you enjoy fellowship with Christ? Do you pray? Do you spend time with Him? Or, is your relationship with God like so many other of your relationships: broken.
- If you answer yes to these three questions, be warned. It could be evidence that your heart is not aimed towards God - that you are not His child, that you have not experienced His grace. Repent!

## A heart set on anything but God will affect how you listen to God.

- The tragedy of this story: Jesus knew the brothers would not listen to the words of a resurrected man. Directed at the Pharisees: Jesus knew that the Pharisees would not believe the words of a resurrected man.
- Case and point: another Lazarus ([John 11](#)). Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, but the religious leaders refused to believe, instead, they heightened their plot to kill Jesus.
- Then, a short time after raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus went to a cross to die, only to rise again from the dead three days later. How many religious leaders believed Jesus after He rose from the dead? Not many. Nicodemus did. We don't know of any others.
- Sad reality: the good news of the resurrection did not change their hearts.
- Abraham to the rich man: "If they don't believe the Law and Prophets..." That was the problem! The Pharisees didn't believe the Law and Prophets! Specifically, they didn't believe that Jesus was the ONE who the Law and Prophets foretold!
- Their hearts were so set on what they wanted and the lifestyle they wanted, that they missed what God was revealing to them in His Word - the revelation of a suffering Messiah who would rise from the dead ([Isaiah 53](#)).
- **The voice of God couldn't be any more clear.** God has spoken clearly in His Word, and He has shown you the way to life. You have an opportunity to listen to God's voice and respond in faith. What a privilege! Do you waste the privilege?
- **The life-change in people who respond to God's Word is amazing.** Testimony after testimony in this church of lives being changed because

of a willingness to listen to God's voice and respond in faith. People are finding eternal joy in Christ because of the Word of God being applied to the lives of people faithfully responding to the voice of God.

- **Your hard-heartedness will always prevent you from listening to what you need to hear.** An unwillingness to respond to God is evidence of a heart that doesn't want God - a heart that resists the Spirit. To resist the Spirit is to seal your fate - eternal damnation.
- The direction of your heart will determine your final destination. What is the direction of your heart?
- The direction of Jesus' heart - the will of God. "Not my will, but your will be done." Willing to come to this broken world to die in your place and rise again so you could have life everlasting instead of eternal condemnation. He paid the price - suffered the condemnation you deserve - so you could have life. Repent of your sins and turn to Him.