

A STORY OF HELL

Luke 16:19-31

INTRODUCTION:

If you want to create an awkward conversation quickly, there are a few sure-fire topics to bring up. Politics, for example, is sure to do it. Religion often does the trick as well, particularly when someone suggests that there is a singular way to God through Jesus Christ and that all those who do not have faith in Jesus will spend eternity in hell. Conversation over.

MAIN TEXT:

“There was a rich man who would dress in purple and fine linen, feasting lavishly every day. But a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, was lying at his gate. He longed to be filled with what fell from the rich man’s table, but instead the dogs would come and lick his sores. One day the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torment in Hades, he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off, with Lazarus at his side. ‘Father Abraham!’ he called out, ‘Have mercy 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 flame!’

“‘Son,’ Abraham said, ‘remember that during your life you received your good things, just as Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here, while you are in agony. Besides all this, a great chasm has been fixed between us and you, so that those who want to pass over from here to you cannot; neither can those from there cross over to us.’

“‘Father,’ he said, ‘then I beg you to send him to my father’s house—because I have five brothers—to warn them, so they won’t also come to this place of torment.’

“‘But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’

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

“‘But he told him, ‘If they don’t listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded if someone rises from the dead’” (Luke 16:19-31, CSB).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The Bible records an account of a rich man and poor man who both die. The poor man goes to heaven and is embraced by Abraham. The rich man dies and suffers in hell, looks across the great divide in heaven and asks for mercy, water and for someone to warn his family to avoid this place of torment.

God does not send anyone to hell; we go of our own volition as we reject Christ.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him (John 3:17, CSB).

Richard Baxter (Puritan pastor) lived his life from the perspective of both heaven and hell. He directed his church members on “How to Spend the Day with God.”

“Let God have your first awaking thoughts; lift up your hearts to Him reverently and thankfully for the rest enjoyed the night before and cast yourself upon Him for the day which follows. Familiarize yourself so consistently to this that your conscience may check you when common thoughts shall first intrude. Think of the mercy of a night’s rest and of how many that have spent that night in Hell; how many in prison; how many in cold, hard lodgings; how many suffering from agonizing pains and sickness, weary of their beds and of their lives. Think of how many souls were that night called from their bodies terrifyingly to appear before God and think how quickly days and nights are rolling on! How speedily your last night and day will come! Observe that which is lacking in the preparedness of your soul for such a time and seek it without delay.”

PASSAGE OUTLINE:

I. HELL IS ETERNAL.

II. HELL IS A PLACE OF PAIN.

III. HELL IS A PLACE OF FEAR.

IV. HELL IS A PLACE OF SADNESS.

Dante's *Divine Comedy* describes the fictional journey of the author through hell and ultimately to heaven. In the "Inferno" section, he describes the sign above the portal of hell. "Abandon hope all ye who enter here."

V. HELL IS A PLACE OF ISOLATION.

VI. HELL IS A PLACE OF SEPARATION.

A FEW GOOD THINGS IN HELL:

I. GOOD PEOPLE ARE IN HELL.

The rich man in this story is moral and caring.

II. GOOD VISION IS IN HELL.

And being in torment in Hades, he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off, with Lazarus at his side (Luke 16:23, CSB).

III. GOOD PRAYERS ARE IN HELL.

'Father Abraham!' he called out, 'Have mercy 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 flame!' (Luke 16:24, CSB)

IV. GOOD MEMORY IS IN HELL.

'Son,' Abraham said, 'remember that during your life you received your good things, just as Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here, while you are in agony' (Luke 16:25, CSB).

V. GOOD THEOLOGY IS IN HELL.

"... every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11, CSB).

VI. GOOD PRIORITIES ARE IN HELL.

'Father,' he said, 'then I beg you to send him to my father's house—because I have five brothers—to warn them, so they won't also come to this place of torment' (Luke 16:27-28, CSB).

"testify to them": witness

"lest": warn them

VII. GOOD INTENTIONS ARE IN HELL.

One can reject Christ through outright rebellion, but rejection of the Lord does not have to be active. One can deny and refuse Christ also through apathy, indifference, procrastination and even ignorance. Some people fully intend to follow the Lord, and one day they plan to do so.

CONCLUSION:

Hell was not prepared for you! Jesus has prepared a place for you.

“Don’t let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if not, I would have told you. I am going away to prepare a place for you. If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also. You know the way to where I am going.”

“Lord,” Thomas said, “we don’t know where you’re going. How can we know the way?”

Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him” (John 14:1-7, CSB).