

## WHAT THE RICH MAN DISCOVERED IN DEATH

By Pastor Henry Mahan

**Bible Text: Luke 16:16-19**

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I have a very, very solemn and serious subject today. I am going to speak to you on this subject: "What the rich man discovered in death." Now, our text is found in Luke chapter 16, and I am going to read 12 or 13 verses, so it would be very profitable for you, if it's convenient for you, to get a Bible and turn to Luke 16 and read with me. Follow along as I read the scripture. I've got to read all of the scripture in order to speak on this subject. You're very familiar with this passage of scripture.

It's our Lord Jesus Christ speaking, and he says in verse 19, Luke 16, vs 19 thru 31, listen to the Master.

*"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."*

Now my subject is not a pleasant subject, I just prefer not to speak on death and judgment and condemnation. I'd much rather bring a message on faith, hope and love and you would rather hear a message on faith, hope and love rather than death, judgment and eternal condemnation. But we've got to be true to the scriptures, we've got to preach all the council of God.

Remember when Paul was bidding farewell to the elders of Ephesus he said, *“I’ve kept back nothing profitable to you, I’ve kept back nothing that you need to hear, I have not shunned to declare unto you all the council of God.”* I haven’t refused, and so, the scriptures have much to say about the condemnation of unbelievers, the condemnation of wicked men. And our Master had a lot to say about this. This is the Master; this is the Lord himself speaking here.

And I want to entitle this message, I want to work from this point, “what the rich man discovered when he died.” What do you think he discovered? Here was a man who was living and fairing sumptuously and popular and powerful and prestigious and had a lot of possessions and luxuries. And there was a beggar at his gate full of sores, desiring just to eat the crumbs that fell from his table. But here was a man who died, and suddenly he died, and in hell lifted up his eyes.

Well, I’ll tell you the first thing he learned: (1) The first thing he learned, he learned that death finally comes to everybody. That’s the first thing he discovered. The beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom, then it says, and the rich man also died. Now the rich man expected Lazarus to die. Beggars die every day, poor people die every day, old people die every day, sick people die every day, and ordinary people die every day. But this says; he also died. The rich man also died, death came to his mansion.

Death visited Lazarus at the gate where he begged day after day. But death came on up that beautiful stone walk and entered the mansion. Death came to his money, death came to his power, death came to his influence, he died, and you’re going to die and I’m going to die, and that’s just so. And I’ll tell you, if I were to take a poll right now of everybody listening to my voice and ask you personally, many of you are very popular, and very powerful and some of you are prosperous in full health and strength, and let me ask you this question: do you believe you’ll die tonight? Do you have any thought of dying? I don’t think this man did either, but it said he also died.

Well the scripture tells us that, it says, *“It’s appointed unto men once to die, after that the judgment.”* *“Boast not thyself of tomorrow, you don’t know what a day will bring forth,”* and again David wrote, *“teach me oh Lord to number my days,”* my what? My days, not my years, decades, my days, that I may apply my heart to wisdom. Set your house in order, you’re going to die and not live. So that’s the first thing that this proud, covetous man discovered. That everybody dies, everybody dies and you’re going to die and I’m going to die.

Tell you the second thing he discovered was this: (2) Now listen to me, he discovered that death doesn’t end everything; death is not annihilation. Death is not the end of this man and not only that, death not only didn’t end everything, it didn’t change anything. It didn’t change anything, now you listen, you perk up your ears a little bit, right here, and listen to brother Mahan, listen carefully, it says, the rich man also died and was buried and in hell he lifted up his eyes. He was still him, he lifted up, he was still his. This was still his eyes, his mouth, his hands, his feet. He lifted up his eyes, nothing changed except one thing; his location nothing changed.

You know, most people believe when a person dies, he suddenly becomes a better person. You can take the most outstanding rogue, thief, politician or whatever you want to call them in our nation, and when they die, they suddenly are up there with Moses, and Isaiah, and Joseph and the Lord, going from mansion to mansion, having tea parties. Everybody that dies suddenly becomes a better person. All debts are cancelled, all evil forgotten, all sins erased, all iniquities dismissed. My friends, it's not so, it's just not so. Here was a man, a covetous, proud, wealthy, selfish man. And there's a poor man at his gate that would just like a few crumbs once in a while. And he never had any compassion on him or, concern for him. And when he died he remained the same.

This man was an evil man on earth; he's an evil man in hell. He was a selfish, covetous man on earth; he's the same kind of person in death. Listen, listen, listen to Revelation 22, listen to me, vs. 10 *"and the angel of the lord said to me, Seal not the sayings of the prophesy of this book for the time is at hand. He that is unjust let him be unjust still, he that is filthy let him be filthy still, he that is holy, let him be holy still. He that is righteous, let him be righteous still."* As a man lives, death will find him, judgment will sentence him and eternity will hold him right where he was, evil, filthy, unjust, unrighteous, selfish, and covetous.

Let me show you that, it's right here in front of you. The rich man on earth thought only of himself. While he lived he only thought of himself. Now that he's dead, he's still just thinking of himself. He says Father Abraham have mercy on me. Don't you suppose anybody else was around him? Have mercy on me. Send Lazarus to me. Send Lazarus that he may dip his finger in water and cool my tongue. And then when he wanted some help, he said, send Lazarus not back to the world, not to warn other people, send him to my house, my father's house and let him warn my brothers. The man hasn't changed one iota.

And I'll tell you when a believer dies; nothing changes. He lays aside an old body and an old mind and those things, but he still has that new heart God gave him when he brought him to faith. He still has that same love shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. He still has that same fellowship, that same generosity, that same kindness, that same tenderness, that same spirit.

And when an unbeliever, an unsaved man dies, he's the same old wicked, selfish, covetous, no-count person that he was on this earth. He that's filthy, let him be filthy still, he that's unholy, let him be unholy still, he that's righteous. See, death can't put away sin, only Christ can put away sin. Death can't convert a man. Death doesn't convert anybody. Christ converts people, it's the power of God that saves the soul and puts in him a new heart. Death can't give a man a new heart. People say, well, when a man dies, he changes. Not on your life, he doesn't change. He dies like he lives. And eternity keeps him just like he died, just like he lived. There's no change after a man dies. The rich man discovered that. He discovered that everybody dies and that everybody goes on through eternity just like they died, without hope, without help, without God. See, I told you it was solemn didn't I?

(3) The third thing he discovered: He discovered that God will punish sin. Now, most people do not believe that. Most people do not believe that Almighty God has any wrath or any anger toward evil. We're told God loves everybody. God loves everything and everybody. We're told

that God's not angry with anybody. And consequently, we take this to mean that God won't judge anybody and God won't punish anybody and God won't punish sin. But this man discovered differently, he discovered that the wages of sin is death, eternal death and eternal condemnation. He discovered that the Prophet told the truth, when he said, "*The soul that sinneth will die.*" He discovered God is angry with the wicked. That's what David, beloved David, wrote in the Psalms; "*God is angry with the wicked.*"

Most people, listen to me a moment, put down what you're doing, and listen to me just a moment. Most people believe one of two things: Most people believe God is too good and too loving to condemn ungodly people. God's just too good and too loving to condemn. Or they believe this: or they believe they're too good to be condemned. Now which is it? Well, neither one's true.

God is good, but the judge of the earth will do right. God must punish sin. God will, by no means, clear the guilty. And you and I are not too good to be condemned. If we get what we deserve, we will be condemned. You see, God must and will punish sin; Adam discovered that in the Garden. The Lord God said eat and die. He did and he did. He ate and he died. Noah's friends found out God will punish sin. God sent a flood and destroyed the whole world, every living thing. Pharaoh discovered at the Red Sea, God will punish sin. Sodom discovered it in the plains, God is angry with the wicked.

Abraham interceded for Sodom. He said Lord, would you destroy a whole city because of certain people? He said suppose I find 50 righteous people in that city, would you spare 50? Oh the Lord said, I'll spare it for 50 people. Well Lord, suppose I find 40, I'll spare it for 40. 30? I'll spare it for 30. 10? I'll spare it for 10. Couldn't find 10 righteous people and God burned it up. Israel discovered in the wilderness, God will punish sin. They did not enter in because of unbelief. And listen to me, listen carefully, what proof do I have that God will punish sin?

Go to the cross. There on that cross is the Son of God Himself; suffering, bleeding, dying, under the wrath of God. Not for His sins, for our sins, He was a substitute; He was a sacrifice, a sin offering for us. "*If God spared not his own Son*" Paul wrote in Romans 8: "*but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with him freely give us all things*" and how shall He not also punish other people who have sins of their own, yes, the cross reveals the love of God, but it reveals the justice of God. The cross reveals the mercy of God, but the cross reveals the wrath of God. "*He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him.*" And it wasn't the Roman Soldiers who put him on that cross, oh; their wicked hands did it. But they did what God determined before to be done. They carried out the determinate council and foreknowledge of God.

The scripture says; "*it pleased God to bruise him.*" God put His soul, made His soul an offering for sin. God put Him to shame; He was God's sacrifice for sin. They just did what God ordained them to do, when He left them to themselves, now that's true. This man discovered God would punish sin. That's the reason we need a Savior. He's not going to punish the sins of those who are in Christ. If He's already punished Christ in your place, He'll never punish you. He was wounded for our sins, and by His stripes we are healed.

All right, the (4th) thing this man discovered: All men die. Death doesn't change a man's condition and heart. He's the same. And God will punish sin, and here's what he discovered. Now, you listen to me and think with me. This man discovered that his religion brought him to know Abraham. He keeps talking about Father Abraham, Father Abraham, well, he didn't know Abraham's Lord, and he didn't know Abraham's God. Now evidently, this man was a religious fellow while on earth. I know he was a covetous man, a selfish man, and a proud man, but was still a religious man, because most people are. And he knew about Abraham and he kept addressing Abraham as his Father, Father Abraham, asking for help, asking for mercy. But our help and our mercy doesn't come from Abraham, he should know that.

It comes from the Lord God, the Redeemer, Jehovah, our Substitute, our Savior. It's Christ that saves. It doesn't say whosoever shall call on the name of Abraham, or the name of Mary or the name of St. Jude or the name of some individual. It's whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Jesus thy Son of David, have mercy on me, not Abraham, Jesus Christ.

You see, these people over there in John Chapter 8, they told our Lord, "*we have Abraham as our Father.*" That's what this man had, Abraham as his Father, but he didn't know Abraham's God. This is so important what I'm trying to say to you. They said to our Lord, they said we have Abraham as our Father. And our Lord replied: "*your Father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, he saw it and he was glad.*" This rich man was looking to Abraham; Abraham was looking to the Lord Jesus. This man read Moses and Moses wrote of the Lord Jesus. "*Moses wrote of me,*" Christ said. This man kept the Passover when he was on earth but he missed Christ our Passover. This man boasted of the law and the law slew him.

Oh the shackles of religion. These shackles of religion that bind the sinner to duties and customs and traditions and Bible heroes and they never come to know the living, redeeming, almighty, interceding, crucified, risen, exalted, Lord Jesus Christ, who is our hope. This man is in the bondage of religion, calling on Abraham and didn't know Abraham's Lord. Abraham believed God and was counted to him for righteousness. Abraham saw Christ. He saw my day, if the Son will make you free, you'll be free indeed. Abraham was set free by the Son of God. You'll know the truth and the truth will make you free.

Last, this man learned that men die, all men. He learned that death doesn't change anything; you've got to be changed before death. The Lord Jesus has to give you a new heart and a new nature. And he learned that God will punish sin and he discovered that though he had religion he had no Mediator. Abraham is not the Mediator between us and God. He's calling on the wrong person. He had no Mediator, there's one Mediator, Jesus Christ our Lord.

(5) Fifthly, he discovered that Christ the Redeemer is revealed to men through the preaching of the Word, not by miracles and signs and wonders. See, he had 5 brothers, he said Father Abraham, send Lazarus back to my fathers house, I've got 5 brothers. Warn them, testify, tell them not to come to this awful place. So he began to think up ways that he could warn them, and here's what he came up with. Send Lazarus down there, raise Lazarus from the dead, they remember him. They use to come to my house, and they saw Lazarus lying out there by the gate. And they know he died, they know he died a poverty stricken, poor beggar. Now if they see him back there, and he warns them, they won't come.

What could Lazarus tell those brothers that Moses and the Prophets didn't tell them about sin, about God, about death, about judgment, about hell? What could Lazarus tell you today that God's Word doesn't tell you, that you know at least in your head, you already know? What could Lazarus if he came back from the dead, what could he tell you that God doesn't tell you in his Word? Why would you believe Lazarus if you won't believe God?

Jesus Christ rose from the grave. He came back from the dead, the first born of every creature. And he told us, people don't believe him. What could Lazarus add to the testimony of the Son of God? Well, Abraham said: "*send Lazarus back to the earth.*" Abraham says, "*they have the Word of God, let them hear God's Word.*" He objected, he said no, they won't hear the word. I wouldn't hear it; they won't hear it.

Oh, they'll hear music, and whoop tee do, and carrying on, and visions, and miracles and dreams, and all these things, but they won't hear the word of God. But if somebody rose from the dead they would believe, and Abraham answered: listen, they won't believe though one rose from the dead. It's not miracles that changed the heart, it's not the healing of the body that changes the soul. It's not the miracles. Israel saw more miracles per day than this generation sees in a lifetime. They saw the rock give water; the heavens rain bread and quail. They saw their whole nation pass through on dry land, a divided sea. and saw Pharaoh's army drown. They saw the miracles, but they didn't believe God.

And this is what, this is what Abraham says to him, "*let them hear the Word of God.*" Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. If they hear not the Word of God and repent and believe, they won't believe though one rose from the dead. What I'm telling you this morning is enough, and all that God's going to tell us. We can't add to what He's already written.