

Eternity

Call to Worship: Isaiah 40:6b-8

Hymn Insert- *All that Thrills My Soul*

1st Scripture: Psalm 90

Hymn #574- *Have Thine Own Way, Lord!*

2nd Scripture: Luke 16:19-31

Hymn #727- *When the Roll is Called up Yonder*

Introduction:

Ten Facts:

Fact #1: Everything that exists in the visible and invisible realm, including you and I, was created by an all sovereign, all powerful, all knowing, all holy and righteous God.

Fact #2: Everything that our all-wise God created was created for a specific purpose, summed up in bringing glory, praise and worship to our God.

Fact #3: Man was given the glorious and unique privilege of bearing the very image of God, being a rational, ruling and moral being.

Fact #4: Man has rebelled against God, falling short of His glory, and this is evident by the self-serving, lust seeking, godless, corrupt nature that now pervades a once perfect humanity.

Fact #5: Because of the fallen nature and condition of every human being, every human being dies. We all will die. You will die.

Fact #6: God created mankind to live forever. There is life beyond physical death.

Fact #7: Life lived in this world is incomprehensibly short, compared to the life that will continue beyond the grave. [Less than one frame on an infinitely long movie reel]

Fact #8: What you do in this life, makes all the difference in determining where you will spend your unending life beyond the grave. This all counts!

Fact #9: When making decisions in life; when interpreting life; when living life, we must and ought to keep the long term picture; the big picture, in view, at all times. We must train our minds to constantly consider "eternity."

Fact #10: This is a universal principle that should be embraced by all people, Christians and non-Christians.

I hope that as we consider the descriptive and sobering story, told by our Lord here in this text, that it will motivate us all unto this end. Christian, the reality of contemplating "eternity" is a critical component to progressing in your sanctification and abiding in Christ. Non-Christian, the reality of contemplating "eternity" is a critical component to bringing you to repentance and faith in Christ, and the only salvation that can deliver your never-dying soul from the everlasting judgment to come.

I. The Beginning and End of the Rich Man

This story (and most likely parable--I will assume from here on) was part of Jesus' response to the Pharisees, who were mocking Him for the parable that He had just told at the beginning of the chapter. At the end of that parable, Jesus added the concluding comment in verse 13, which states, "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (wealth)."

In essence, Jesus was saying that you cannot have the best of both worlds; you can't love, serve, worship and treasure God, while loving, serving, worshiping and treasuring the things of this world. And this didn't settle well with the religious leaders of the day, which is why we are told in verse 14, "Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him." His challenge spoke right to the heart of their idolatry, and so, rather than repent of their material idolatry, they criticized Him, as if His teachings were senseless, below them, and without any true merit. And part of His response then to their mockery, was this parable of the rich man and Lazarus, given in verses 19ff.

And this parable speaks of two main subjects, who lived very different lives both in the present and beyond the grave. The first of these was a "certain rich man." Our Lord probably left him without a name, so that His audience could best identify with this man; for he was clearly representative of the Pharisees, and all who set their hopes on the riches of this world. Notice some significant facts given about the rich man:

1) He was very wealthy. We are told that he "was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day" (vs. 19). He had very expensive clothing; he had all of the popular dress and gear, and he fared above and beyond the basic daily life needs. He could afford to be selective with his food choices, probably unlike the average person of his day. He had all of the latest gadgets and gizmos, and lacked nothing, ever. He lived the good life.

2) His love of wealth and material things; his love of the world, caused him to neglect to consider the needs of the poor. Lazarus was a constant reminder, laid at his gate, that ought to have moved the rich man to have compassion on those who are less fortunate. But his god was his wealth, and so, he concerned himself not with the needs of others. Had he served the true and living God, he would have had eyes that saw outside of his own self-serving, comfort zone.

3) He was religious. In verse 24, when he is in Hades, he cries out to Abraham, "*Father Abraham...*" He knew about Abraham and called him, "Father," assuming that his Jewish decent would have merited some type of favor with the patriarch. He was religious, and in light of our Lord's target audience here (the Pharisees), we can assume that he was very religious.

4) His love of money, and his neglect of considering the needs of others, both evidenced that his religion was shallow and empty, which is why we are told that he was tormented in hades, following his death. Lazarus was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom (to the rest and glory that is granted to all who share the true faith of Abraham), but the rich man was simply buried. And then, we are told that he was suffering from the fiery torments of hades, when he looked up in agony to see Lazarus now living the good life in Abraham's bosom. Suddenly, he took notice of Lazarus, but only when it was to his own benefit, of course.

5) The rich man was suffering from the agonizing pains of hell fire, and there was no relief to be found for him...ever. He was experiencing the burning pain of the fire, without ever losing his conscious existence. He was tormented continually! Even a drop of water would have

brought him some very miniscule fraction of relief...some split second, partial ease of inner pain, but it was not granted him. The place of everlasting grace; the place where Lazarus was, was separated from Hades by a great and impenetrable gulf.

6) The rich man sought mercy for his living relatives; he asked that Lazarus be sent back from the dead to warn them, but Abraham had informed him that even such a miraculous warning would ultimately be ineffective. The presence of a resurrected dead man, could never change the heart. Only Moses and the prophets could persuade them (that is, the living and powerful Word of God).

Conclusive thoughts about the rich man

The rich man lived the good life, all the time, prior to his physical death. He lived his "best life now." He put all of his stock in this life and had nothing invested in eternity. And when he died, he paid the price forever!

Some of you here are seeking to live the "good life" here and now, aren't you? You are content living life your way, apart from God, pursuing whatever it is that you think can ultimately satisfy you...and though you are constantly left dry, you go on and on with your pursuit. But don't you see the end? Don't you have the end in view? Will you invest everything in one frame of an infinitely long movie reel? You are going to face God one day...and for some of you, that may be sooner than later. You are going to die...can you say that to yourself with me, this morning? Stop hiding from reality; stop thinking that you are indestructible; stop deceiving yourself with the deadly notion, that you will seek God some other time! You are going to die! *Today* is the day of salvation...not tomorrow or the next day or the next day after that. Today...seek the Lord while He may be found. Even if you live beyond today, God may harden your heart tomorrow. He may give you completely over to your sins; he may give you over to resenting and hating Him; He may turn your naturally dead heart to stone...to impenetrable steel! Repent of your sins; seek Christ today, right now, before it is too late! Life is short! Death is inevitable! Hell is forever! Contemplate eternity...don't run from it...you just might find grace and salvation in your time of need!

[And remember, religion/born in Christian home, is irrelevant in itself]

II. The Beginning and End of Lazarus

Let us then consider some significant facts about Lazarus:

- 1) Lazarus was a Christian. His faith in God is assumed by his end (Abraham's bosom).
- 2) Lazarus was a very poor man. He was so poor, that he longed for even the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.
- 3) Lazarus was full of sores. He was a man who was very familiar with constant pain and discomfort. He could not even walk, and had to be laid at the rich man's gate to beg. Wild dogs licked his wounds with their salty tongues.
- 4) Lazarus lived a very difficult and painful life. From the world's standpoint, he was a living waste, a loser, a nobody, to be pitied...better off dead.
- 5) Lazarus was known by God, and is mentioned by name, probably in part, to emphasize that God knows His own by name. The rich and famous are nobodies to God, and the world's nobodies are known intimately by God.
- 6) Lazarus died and received a divine escort service to Abraham's bosom. He was unknown to the world, but carried by angels to glory!

Conclusive Thoughts About Lazarus

Lazarus suffered great and ongoing torment in the "single frame" of this life, but he was comforted eternally in glory; in the eternal movie reel. The once starved Lazarus, was now overflowing with the blessings of glory, as the once satiated rich man, was now left eternally thirsty in hell.

Now brethren, we might be tempted to say, "Wow, Lazarus had it tough, but I am glad he made it home," while missing a very important personal application here. One of the clear messages given in this parable is the significance of constantly placing "eternity" in the daily

equation of life. This is not our home, brethren. And if we treat it as such, we will make very poor decisions; we will grossly misinterpret our daily circumstances and trials, and we will be on the verge of despair often. You see, if we don't constantly remind ourselves of our identity in Christ, we will settle into the security of this world's comforts, and we will fail to live by faith; we will fail to take risks for the glory of Christ; we will fail to live sacrificially, because we will do all that we can to protect our "this world's" comforts. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. No one can serve two masters; you can't serve God and wealth. You must love one and hate the other. You must see this life as an investment; a sacrificial investment, which will bring forth the reward in the next life.

Brethren, we must live with eternity in view! It is the only way we can endure our preordained trials and sufferings; and that, in such a way that the light of Christ will shine in and by us, through them!

*How do you endure the ongoing pains and sufferings of a very difficult physical trial; how do you endure sleepless nights and the agony of discomfort; how do you deal with the unknowns of whether or not you will live to see the other side of this sickness, while praising God, witnessing to family members and encouraging the brethren? Only by keeping a firm grip on eternity!

*How do you continue to faithfully work a job that you just do not naturally enjoy, serving a boss, who is obstinate and unfriendly, with an attitude of gratitude and the sincere desire for your boss's greatest good and profit, serving him as unto the Lord? Only by keeping a firm grip on eternity!

*How do you continue on in a difficult marriage; no, not just continue on, but fervently strive to love, serve and honor your spouse, in accordance with the clear teachings of Scripture, seeking to fulfill your role as a God ordained wife or husband? How do you allow yourself to be vulnerable, humbling yourself unto the honor of your spouse, even when they don't return the favor? Only by keeping a firm grip on eternity! Only by clinging to your greater identity in Christ!

*How do you fervently and sincerely love and cherish your brethren in the church, with all of their quirks, differences and shortcomings? How do you commit yourself to serving the

body without looking for recognition, having the mind to work unto the edification and building up of the body, at all times? Only by keeping a firm grip on eternity!

*How do you sing hymns of praise to God, while being locked up in stocks, held in the inner most cell of a prison for your faith, with Paul and Silas, not knowing when or even if you will ever get out? Only by keeping a firm grip on eternity!

*How do you bear any manner of sufferings and persecutions, tortures and torments, seeing your body gradually torn apart, with a steadfast unwillingness to deny your faith in Christ? Only by keeping a firm grip on eternity!

*How do you maintain an outward focus in all circumstances; how do you fix your eyes on the brethren, even to your own hurt; how do you overcome the fear of man and proclaim the Gospel to hell bound souls; How do you withstand every and any attack from the enemy, bearing your cross and remaining on the straight and narrow path? Only by keeping a firm grip on eternity! Only by keeping your eyes fixed on Christ, the Author and Finisher of your faith!

[Close with Psalm 73].

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25