

MORNING SERMON OUTLINE

EVEN IF SOMEONE RETURNS FROM THE DEAD!

The Parable of the Rich Man & Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31

In His *Parable of the Unrighteous Steward* (16:1-9), Jesus taught His disciples not to serve mammon but God, and to use earthly wealth in serving God & people. The Pharisees scoffed at Him for this, because "they were lovers of money," as they scorned Jesus for receiving & ministering to "sinners" (15:1f16:14f) The *Parable of the Rich Man & Lazarus* is a response to them & their scoffing.

AND it applies **to us**: Where will you go when you die – to heaven or to hell? Is any question more important than, "**Where will I spend eternity?**"

1. A Parable or a Factual Account?

It does not claim to be a "parable" and one of its chief characters is named (Lazarus – not the one of John 11).

But a number of Jesus' parables recorded in Luke are not so labeled (14:16ff, 15:11, 16:1, 17:7). And the name is part of the lesson.

The story contains details that cannot be taken literally.

Our Lord made use of a commonly held Jewish folk view of heaven & hell.

However, His purpose in this parable rests on taking seriously

(1) the **reality of heaven & hell**, & (2) the fact that what we believe & do in this life determines where we will spend eternity.

The God of grace & justice often **reverses** in the next world the standing of people in this world – which *should* have been clear to people in His day (1 Sam. 2:2-10, see Lk. 1:51-53) – hence the great reversal of fortunes – Lazarus the beggar to heaven (Abraham's bosom); the rich man to torment in hell.

2. Why did Lazarus go to heaven?

Is poverty & suffering here a guarantee of heavenly bliss to come? No.

Clue: The name Jesus uses (in Hebrew) "*Elasar*" – "God has helped."

With nothing of his own, his hope was in the Lord to be his help – the Lord who sent angels to carry him to heaven.

From the rest of Scripture: sinners who look to God alone for their hope & salvation have an eternal home with Him.

3. Why did the rich man go to hell?

Because wealth is evil and damns its possessors to hell? No

Abraham was rich. 1 Tim.6:10: "The *love* of money is the root of all kinds of evil." & 6:17-19 instructs rich Christian how to use their wealth righteously – agreeing with Luke 16:1-9!

The rich man worshiped his wealth not God. He did not love God, & he did not love his neighbor (Lazarus).

Underlying these sins: He did **not believe God's Word** so as to repent.

4. What should we take away from this? The final point.

a. Miracles – even a resurrection from the dead – will not convince people who do not believe God's Word.

What is the nature of unbelief, and what can be done about it?

b. YOU are hearing God's Word now. Do you receive it with faith in Christ & repentance from sin? Or brush it off? Heaven or hell!