

**Hell Is A Place...**  
**Luke 16:19-31**  
**April 26, 2026**

Wed night at the WRE celebration, when I asked the teachers to come forward, the students screamed and cheered. You guys gotta up your game.

This is a photo of Baba Gurgur which is an oil field in Iraq discovered in 1927 and has been burning ever since. Brennender Berg is German for Burning Mountain and is in Germany. It is a coal-seam that ignited in 1668 and continues to burn today. (s) Another Burning Mountain is in Australia. It too is an coal seam and is the world's oldest continuously burning fire, they think for over 5,000 years. This is called the Gates of Hell. It's in Turkmenistan and is a natural gas field that collapsed when a drill punctured the cavern and the roof collapsed in 1971. It was ignited to keep poisonous gases from spreading and hundreds of fires have been burning there ever since. Imagine being thrown into the gates of hell. We're going to talk about something even worse today.

Please open your Bibles to Luke 16. Pew Bible. Last week we talked about what a great place heaven is and how all of us should be ready to go immediately! Heaven is a place! Well, you knew this sermon was coming. This one will be a little more challenging to hear, but if you think it's hard to hear, you should try preaching it. Nevertheless, it is a truth that the Bible teaches. A man was reading through the bulletin one Sunday and came across this announcement: Next Sunday's sermon: What is hell? Come early and listen to the pastor sing. As painful as that would be, it still doesn't quite capture how utterly awful hell is. To get a better idea, please stand as we read about it in Luke 16:19 "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. 20 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores 21 and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. 24 So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity 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 fire.' 25 "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' 27 "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, 28 for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' 29 "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 30 "No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them,

they will repent.' 31 "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Before we get too deep into this passage, I want to address a couple things up front. 1. Some say this is a parable, not an actual story. Perhaps. But I believe Jesus is telling about 2 real men because in none of His other parables does He name anyone. But even if it is a parable, it's obvious that He told it to help us understand something about life after death, so the truths are just as true either way.

The second objection people sometimes raise is related to the original languages. In the Greek, the word is not hell, but Hades. Exactly. That's because there is no Greek word for hell. In fact a couple Greek words are translated as hell. Hades was the place of the dead but obviously not of all the dead for Lazarus went not to Hades, but to Abraham's bosom, the place of the righteous dead. Jesus told the thief on the cross, today you'll be with me in paradise, not Hades. Further-more, in Revelation 20, at the Great White Throne Judgement that we looked a little while back, Death and Hades will give up the dead that are in them and each person will be judged. Then Death and Hades, along with every person whose name is not written in the Book of life are all thrown into the lake of fire which is the second death. So even though Hades is not an eternal place, it empties all who are within it to an everlasting lake of fire which is even worse. (Rev 20:13-15)

So let's see what we can learn about Hell from this story Jesus told. 1. Hell is a real place. Just as heaven is a real place, so is hell. About 73% of American believe in heaven. We like heaven. Everybody thinks they're going there. But less than 60% of us believe in hell. Friends, popular opinion does not determine whether hell exists or not. It unquestionably does. For if it's not an actual place, Jesus was badly mistaken, for He mentioned hell more often than heaven. We will refer to some of those times today and each time He did, there is as a direct assertion that it's a real place. One of the worst heresies the devil can get you to believe is that hell doesn't exist. It does. If there no hell, Jesus would never have had to die to save you and I from it. As the Bible and the church have taught for thousands of years, there is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun.

From the passage we read, we find that Hell is a place of suffering and misery. Say suffering. The rich man was in torment. He said that he was in great agony. He particularly mentioned thirst as one of his torments. He begged for a just a drop of water. Just one drop. And friend, that once rich man is still in agony in that fire today and he still hasn't gotten any relief for his thirst. Nor shall he ever.

Last week I mentioned that in Lee Strobel's book, *Seeing the Supernatural*, he mentioned people who had died and been resuscitated who experienced a brief taste of heaven. What I didn't share is that not everyone experienced that. Many near death experiences are not pleasant. Howard Storm was a college professor and an atheist. When

he died, he followed some mysterious visitors who turned on him in pitch darkness, not bright light. He felt total terror beyond any movie or book. They began hitting, pulling, kicking, biting and tearing him as they laughed and swore at him. They gutted him, clawed off an eye and his ears. After he came back to life, it profoundly changed him. He got saved, resigned his professorship to pastor a church. Hell is a place of great suffering and misery.

This rich man tells us something else about hell. Say fire. I am in agony **in this fire**. Anyone who has ever survived severe burns describes it as one of the most painful injuries imaginable. And hell is a place of fire. Even temporary Hades is a fiery place according to this rich man even before he is transferred at the Great White Throne to the Lake of Fire. In Mark 9:48, Jesus referred to hell as a place where the worm doesn't die and the fire is not quenched. In that passage, the Greek word is Gehenna which refers to the Valley of Hinnom which was an open dump outside Jerusalem. But the word was also used as an idiom for hell. I remember the Maurertown dump and there was most always a fire burning. There were rats and I'm sure there were plenty of wormy maggots as well.

An unquenchable fire that even Woodstock's finest volunteers cannot extinguish. Jude 7 states that the intense burning of Sodom and Gomorrah serves "as an example of those who suffer the punishment of **eternal** fire." It will make the California fires look like a weeny roast. I shared those examples earlier of fires that have burned for hundreds and even thousands of years. Of course stars are great balls of nuclear fire that burn with extreme heat. In Matt 25:41 Jesus said, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." The fires of hell are eternal but they were never made for humans. They were made for Satan and those who follow him. But when Adam rejected God, the eternal fires of hell became the destiny of all mankind.

Some believe fire is a metaphor and perhaps it is. I tend to take the Bible literally unless the context indicates otherwise, but those who say it is not literal fire often do so because in Matthew 8 and 22 Jesus describes hell as a place of darkness. Say darkness. So if it's dark, how could it also be a place of fire? Let me ask you, what can God do? Of course. Anything. But even here on earth, some chemicals, like methanol and hydrogen produce virtually no visible flame although they are extremely hot. Billy Graham said if it's not literal fire, Jesus is using this to illustrate something far worse. Since God is light and since God will not be in hell, there will be no light there of any kind. Imagine living in utter darkness forever. Some are scared of the dark here, but let me tell you, the dark here is nothing to be scared of compared to the eternal darkness of hell.

Notice too how lonely this rich man is in hell. Say lonely. Surely some of his friends were there. Remember the song, Only the Good Die Young? Billy Joel said he'd rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints. Let me tell you, from everything the Bible tells us, there will be no laughter in hell. No comradery of friends or loved ones but

rather utter, total despair and eternal loneliness. Few things are any more emotionally painful than loneliness and hell will be that forever. Many people here try to soften the harshness of hell by laughing and joking about it, but Jesus didn't. He took it very seriously which is why it's never good to let hell slip into our vocabulary as a curse word. It tends to lessen the seriousness of it. There will be no drunken parties in hell, only billions of years to think and to regret.

Say regret. Hell is a place of regret. We've all felt that before. I should've bought IBM stock when it first came out. I regret telling off my boss. I regret how I treated my wife. Imagine the pain of eternally regretting a decision to reject Jesus. Of putting it off too long, I'll do it later. Of choosing things over Him and His Kingdom. Jesus said hell is a place of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Why are they doing that? They're regretting their foolishness, stupidity, their selfishness, their procrastination. Hell is a place of regret.

There are many different attempts to soften hell by changing what the Bible says about it. Some believe in annihilation, where Hell will not be eternal. It is a belief that unbelievers will be annihilated at some point and simply cease to exist. It might give some comfort, but if that were true, then heaven would also not be eternal. Our souls **are** eternal and we will all live forever in one place or the other. Nowhere does the Bible even hint at this but rather states just the opposite very clearly and very often. Like Heaven, Hell too is eternal. The great poet Dante describes the sign hanging over Hell's entrance, "Abandon hope all who enter here."

Another false teaching is universalism, the belief that everyone will eventually be saved. Sure doesn't sound that way from Jesus. Not in today's text and not in Luke 14 where He says those who refused His banquet invitations wouldn't even get a taste. This belief was promoted by Rob Bell who wrote Love Wins years ago before abandoning his faith. Who wouldn't want this to be true? Unless your eternal home is next to an unrepentant Adolf Hitler, Ted Bundy, or Hugh Hefner. It's not God's will that any should perish, but many blatantly refuse Jesus and **will** perish because of it. In fact, Jesus said **most** people travel the broad road that leads to destruction. Only a few enter the straight and narrow. If universalism is true, why did He give us the great commission? Why did the disciples surrender their lives preaching the Gospel? Brethren founder Alexander Mack flirted with universalism before eventually rejecting it. Even if he hadn't, he is not our source of truth. Jesus is and Jesus warned of eternal hell. What is universal is the Gospel! It's open to everyone everywhere! Whosoever will may come! But God will not force anyone to receive Him.

Others push back and claim that God must be exceptionally cruel to punish people forever. We may be tempted to believe such a lie until we get a true picture of what we really deserve for what's in our own souls. What **do** we deserve? Hell! But I'm basically

a good person! No you're not. You either haven't read the Bible or don't believe it. All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. Your heart and mine are desperately wicked above all things. Hell is our default setting for which He has provided an alternative. CS Lewis wrote, There are only two kinds of people ...: "those who say to God Thy will be done," and those to whom God says in the end, thy will be done." God doesn't send anyone to Hell. "All that are in Hell choose it. It is the natural result of choosing self over God and it becomes fixed for eternity." Lewis also says that even if a million chances were given it would do no good. Finality must come at some point, and an all knowing-God knows when that point is.

But you protest, why does God have to torment them? Why can't He just leave them alone? Actually, I believe the torment comes from their own regret, but CS Lewis said that's exactly what God does do. He does leave them alone. He lets them have what they want. And I would add that the absence of God makes it Hell. For apart from Him we have no good thing. Even in this life, those who reject God still enjoy many of His benefits even if they never acknowledge it or thank Him. Who gave you the oxygen you're breathing today? The life within your body? The food from the earth? James 1:17 says that every good and perfect gift comes from God. But when God is absent, so are all His good things. And hell is the absence of God. Those who didn't want Him won't have Him or His good gifts. He'll give them what they want. But without Him there will be none of His joy, rest, peace, love, etc.

Based on what the Bible teaches, I think you will agree that Hell is a place for all to avoid. Say avoid. My purpose in preaching on it today is twofold. First, if you are saved, will you please tell others about Hell and about Jesus? So they don't go to hell unwarned, untold. Hell was so bad, the rich man didn't want his brothers to be with him. Suddenly, he becomes concerned about evangelism! Imagine how many people his riches could have kept out of hell. Don't wait till after you die to tell others about Jesus and to support those who do. By whatever means, tell others yourself, and support others who are telling. Use all you have to advance and expand God's Kingdom! It will be too late after we die. The song we sang earlier, "Brethren, see poor sinners 'round you, slumbering on the brink of woe, (playing hopscotch on the edge of the Grand Canyon!) Death is coming, hell is moving, can you bear to let them go? See our fathers and our mothers, and our children sinking down, Brethren, pray, and holy manna will be showered all around." Door more than pray-witness! Eternity is at stake! I don't want to see anyone end up with the rich man, neither does he and neither does Jesus. The great preacher Charles Spurgeon once said, "If sinners be dammed, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies. If they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees. Let no one go there unwarned and unprayed for." Wouldn't it be great if hell were empty? Brethren Pray, pray, pray, and witness! That's my first reason.

Secondly, if you are not saved, I want you to get a glimpse of what your awful eternity will be like if you die that way. My dear friend, God has sent me here today to

warn you of Hell and to tell you how to avoid it. You don't have to go there! No one has to. It doesn't matter if you are Adolf Hitler or Ted Bundy. No person will be in heaven because of his or her own righteousness! Admit whatever sin you know, confess it, repent, and receive Jesus and with Him, receive the heaven we spoke of last week. I'm not trying to scare anyone into heaven, but I'd rather be scared into heaven than coddled into hell.

For those who still object to the doctrine of Hell, who think God is unfair to let anyone choose to go there, let me ask you this question: "What do you want God to do? To wipe out your past sins and, at all costs, give you a fresh start?" That's exactly what He has done! But you must receive it! He has made a way for you to avoid Hell, take it! No power of hell can ever pluck you from God's hand once you choose Jesus! The rich man wanted Lazarus to go warn his brothers, for, he said, surely they would listen if someone rose from the dead. Alas, someone has risen from the Dead and still many do not listen today. Listen, and receive Jesus today that you might avoid Hell and enjoy God's presence forever!