

One from the Dead

Luke 16:19-31

By [Reverend Mr. Brister H. Ware](#)

*The Lord's Day Evening
December 11, 2011*

It's a joy to be here and our text is found in Luke 16. If you'll turn with me to verse 19 — Luke 16:19-31. Before I read it, I would say to you that the shadows are lengthening for me and the number, as I grow old and my friends and relatives, are dying. And the thought comes to you, "You may have preached your last sermon. Or if you knew that you had one last sermon to preach, what might it be?" Some ministers may think that way, but anyway, this might be it for me:

"There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house — for I have five brothers — so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"

We pray, O Holy Spirit, Thou would speak to us from Thy Word, for Christ's sake. Amen.

The characteristics of these two men, the beggar and the rich man — we had a beggar come by the church today. His name was Chris — said he didn't have a job; he wanted a ticket. He wanted us to pay \$150.00 for a ticket to South Carolina. He had a job up there. We helped him a little bit, told him to come back

tomorrow and we'd consider his need. Billy Joseph is very active in helping transits. I want to assure you, he pours himself into it all the time. So you have a rich man. He evidently loved to flaunt his riches because he wore purple and he lived well. Now my dear wife, this morning, wore purple, but she didn't bring it back tonight! But purple's not so bad. Lydia made her living selling purple. I'm not sure how they made it — out of flowers, out of shellfish. Some way or another it was a very precious commodity and it indicated your status. And every day this beggar would come. Well, how do you know the man wasn't just a cheat, just refused to work, was just somebody you ought to just say, "Go on"? Because he had to be picked up and laid. He was either paraplegic or quadriplegic. He couldn't move. They had to pick him up. So he was genuine. In Bible times there were no welfare payments. There was nothing like that. If you needed help and you didn't have relatives that could do it, they would put you in front of some rich man's house and hopefully he would see the need. He just wanted something to eat.

And the rich man would pass every day and see him and ignore him I guess, but he was not ignored by something else. He was not ignored by the dogs. Now he and the dogs were out there trying to get something to eat together. He might have had to kind of squirm among them to get something before they ate it. It was the most humiliating, degrading thing possible for a Jew. The Jews didn't love dogs like we do. I mean, we love them, but they didn't. They considered them kind of like we do a possum. They just did not have much concern for dogs. In fact, the Bible speaks of people who were condemned as dogs. But these dogs had more compassion than the rich man! They licked his sores. Now dogs lick themselves when they're hurting and when something's injured and they could tell this poor fellow, nobody was caring for him. They at least had some compassion for him. But it was the worst possible time of humiliation. He probably couldn't move. If he didn't want them there, he couldn't move to get them away.

There are a lot of fine rich men in the Bible. They're mentioned through the Bible. There was Lot, Abraham, Job, David, Jacob, Joseph of Arimathea. These were godly rich men, but this man, it doesn't say what he did wrong, it just shows that he was guilty of the sin of omission. Riches have this way of numbing you to the suffering of others. You just can't feel it. You just become anesthetized to it. It doesn't say that Lazarus the poor man did anything good, but they both died. Lazarus went to Abraham's bosom which was a nice way of saying he went to heaven, and the rich man went to hell. And this is one of those rare cases in the Bible where you have people in hell talking. It is as if hell is a place where you're not cut off from your thinking and your personality and who you are. You're able to maybe imagine what you've missed in heaven. Anyway, Jesus, in telling this parable, enables the rich man to look up into heaven and see Abraham and Lazarus and he's in agony and he begs for a little water to cool his tongue. And Abraham says, "Son, remember you had your good things in your life and poor Lazarus, he had nothing." If I was that rich man, I'd say, "Yeah, but this is eternity

and that was life. It's not fair!" Abraham would say, "You're right, it's not fair, but that's the way it is." I think R.C. Sproul has said, "Right now counts forever."

How bad is it in hell? I'm reading from Matthew Poole. He's really one of the best I've ever read. I don't know if you know Poole, if you've read him. He was one of Spurgeon's favorites.

Although atheists and proud, haughty souls in this life make a mock at hell and at the wrath of God to be revealed after this life and despise the poor servants of God who, by their doctrine or holy life and example would teach them better things, yet they shall find the fire of hell so hot, the wrath of God so terrible and intolerable, that if you could imagine that souls under those miseries could have the least dram of charity and good nature left in them, though they apprehend themselves past all hopes of recovery to a better state, yet they would beg that some of those faithful ministers or godly people who they have rejected, despised, and abused, might be sent to every friend they have in the world to warn them from doing as they have done and running the hazard of those torments they feel for doing such things.

If father Abraham, nobody can come down here, up there and up there down here, then send Lazarus to my father's house - I have five brothers — lest they come into this torment. And let him warn them! If you're going to do anything evangelistically — share the Gospel, preach, give someone a Christian book or devotional, take them to church — do it now because you cannot do it after life is over with. Those in hell can't do it and those in heaven can't do it, so do it now. This poor rich man was in agony. His tongue was burning. He wanted water. I wonder if he'd said some things that made his tongue burn. Matthew 12:36 — "But I say unto you that every idle word that man shall speak he shall give an account thereof in the Day of Judgment." I wonder if his tongue was burning because he said some things about people, he made judgments — critical, unforgiving, bitter, resentful about people or said things about God. But he couldn't have a drop of water to cool it. "Send Lazarus to my brother's house!" And Jesus, telling the parable, has Abraham say an amazing thing. If they won't listen to the Scriptures they have, nothing will happen. "I have five brothers — that he may warn them, lest they come into this place of torment!" But Abraham said, "They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them." And he said, "No father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent. I know they have Abraham and the Prophets, I know they do, but they need another type of experience. I mean, everybody knows about Abraham and the Prophets. You go down to the temple, synagogue, you hear it every day. They need something dramatic, something that would really shake them out of their lethargy. Send one from the dead and tell them." He said unto him, "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone

should rise from the dead."

Was Abraham right on that? Did Jesus have it right? Absolutely. You remember in 2 Samuel, Saul went to the witch of Endor and she raised Samuel? It didn't change Saul. He was dead the next day. He didn't repent. He was afraid but he didn't repent. And when Lazarus was raised they didn't repent either. The Pharisees and Jews, when they heard Lazarus was rich, they decided instead of repenting to kill Jesus and not only kill Jesus but kill Lazarus, hoping he'd stay dead this time! That's strictly what the Scripture says — they were not touched by it at all. Someone says, "All he says is what about the Gospel?" But is there no need of the Gospel to bring them to heaven, just Abraham and Moses, Moses and the Scriptures? Doubtless there is, but that is included in Moses and the Prophets who prophesied of Christ, though more darkly than He is revealed in the New Testament. John 5:46 — "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me." John 5:39 — "Search the Scriptures for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me." The New is in the Old concealed; the Old is in the New revealed. But they would read the Scriptures. They could have read Isaiah. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. With His stripes, we are healed." They could have come to some understanding of what it means to be saved. And trying to keep the Ten Commandments, if they were honest, they would have realized they had failed.

We were on a train one time with a Jewish gentleman and we were talking about the Gospel and other things and he insisted that he was going to be saved by keeping the Commandments. I decided to just simply say, "Well that's wonderful. What are the Ten Commandments?" And he got through about three of them and got furious and stormed away! He didn't even know them; he just knew that you were saved by trying to keep them. But there's plenty in the Old Testament about the Gospel that these people could have gotten if they'd wanted to. But they'd had it and they didn't care about it anymore. There it is — the Scripture. They're everywhere. They're in the backseat of your car. They're in your trunk; they're under the seat of your car. They're on the shelf at home. They're in the drawer of the little nightstand. They're on your desk in your office. They're in churches. They're everywhere. Moses and the Prophets — today we have the addition of Christ and the apostles. We have the New Testament, everywhere.

Lud Pierce was a good friend of mine. He's been dead about five years from now. He was a deacon here. He was a Gideon. And he went down to Louisiana to distribute some New Testaments at a school and he got there just as school was out. He had three big boxes of them. The man who was supposed to go with him couldn't go so he was by himself. And he's handed out a few of them. The students were rather lethargic. They weren't particularly interested. "Yeah, well, okay. I'll take it." A few took it but most just said, "We've got that at home." And then this man came out, one of the administrators, and excoriated and tore poor Lud to pieces. "Get that Biblical stuff out of here! We don't need that! We believe in science here! Don't you believe in church and state separation? I don't want

that on this campus — get out! Leave!” He said, “I’m just trying to…” “Leave!” With great disrespect. And Lud picked up his three boxes and barely got across the street to the other side and as he was going across he was thinking, “Lord, You said Your Word would never return void, but I haven’t even given it out yet! The man won’t let me! I have to go over here to this used car lot and hope the kids will come across this big four-lane street.” The man stood there in the schoolyard glaring at Lud. Lud felt broken. He cried and he said, “Lord, help me.” The man then turned, the administrator who had just told him off, walked back in the school. As soon as he was inside, the students rushed across the four-lane and said, “Give me a Bible! Give me one of those Bibles!” And within ten minutes he’d emptied three boxes of them. The administrator was notoriously hated and resented by the students and the teachers too — bitter and just a mean man to be around. Now I understand that school administrators have to be tough, absolutely, but this man evidently had far, far exceeded that. And God, they identified with Lud! They all came and got those Bibles. And he was thrilled. The Lord blessed him.

Talking about beggars, John Burge, whose mother was buried here this week, told me that her husband, John Burge, was a dentist in Kosciusko, and when beggars would come through or anybody with a need would come through they’d ask people, “Do you all have a Salvation Army here in Kosciusko?” They’d say, “Well” — and they’d point down the street — “go to that dental office down there.” They’d say, “That’s a dental office!” They’d say, “That’s our Salvation Army.” And for many years John Burge would take those people home, feed them supper, and put them up in a hotel himself. He was professional and he was excellent. And I loved him. He used to come to our Saturday morning prayer breakfast for a while before he died.

You’re not going to get any extraordinary experience. If you don’t pick up the Bible and read it, nothing will change you. You’re in the middle of the night, you can’t sleep, and you wake up and there’s a bright light in front of you, in front of your bed. And there’s someone standing there and you say, “Who are you?” And he says like the Ghost of Christmas Past, “I am your long lost great-great grandfather and I have come to tell you whatever you do, my great-great grandchild, don’t end up like I am now. I am in chains in hell and there’s no escape. I slighted the Word of God and ignored it. You must not. You must not!” Gone! You say people will change if they saw something like that — don’t bet on it. They don’t. If they don’t pick up the Word of God nothing will change them, nothing.

An interesting book has been written dealing with disasters of one kind or another and there’s a girl who wrote it, it’s very good, and I’m coming to a close. But anyway, her name is Amanda Ripley and she wrote the book, *The Unthinkable — Why Some People Survive and Others Don’t in Disasters*. On March 27, 1977 on the island of Tenerife, a KLM jet 747 and a Pan-Am jet collided. The KLM jet tried to fly over it and hit it. Everybody on the KLM jet died,

but some survived on the Pan-Am jet.

Flora Het, then 70, was sitting on the Pan-Am jet between her husband and her friends in route from their California retirement residence to a Mediterranean cruise when the KLM jet sheared off the top of their plane the impact did not feel so severe. The Hets were thrown forward and to the right but their safety belts held them down. Still, Flora Het found that she could not speak or move. 'My mind was almost blank. I didn't even hear what was going on,' she told an Orange County reporter years later. But her husband, Roy Het, 65, acted immediately. He unbuckled his seatbelt and started toward the exit. 'Follow me,' he told his wife. Hearing him, Flora snapped out of a daze and followed him through the smoke, 'like a zombie,' she said. Just before they jumped out of a hole on the left side of the craft, Flora looked back at her friend, Lorien Lawson, who was just sitting there looking straight ahead, her mouth slightly open, hands folded in her lap. Like dozens of others, she would die from the collision, and not from the collision but from the fire that would follow.

A good number of people survived who were in the Pam-Am jet and some years later a psychologist made a study to find out — Dr. McDonald Douglass, as to why they survived and the other ones didn't. And guess what he found? He found that the ones that survived either had someone to help them get out or they had read the escape manual. You know, it's in the back seat of the seat on front of you. It tells you which doors to go out in time of a fire or emergency. They were the ones who survived. In Pago Pago there was another case like that and only those who studied the escape manual survived. Everybody else died. They knew to go off a certain wing. That was the way off. The other ones tried to go out the way they came in and they died. The Bible is our escape manual for hell — read it or die! It's as simple as that. And they'll be no escape.

In my office, and with this I close, I've got a number of different accouterments. One of them is an anvil. I have it in there because of two things. Number one, when I was in high school this boy wanted to fight me, challenged me to a fight, and in those days you just had to show. Someone had told the teacher, told him that I told the teacher on him. I hadn't done anything like that! And so he said, "You meet me in the alley across from the dog." That's the old greyhound. "And I'm going to kill you, you yellow-bellied chicken!" And so anyway, I started praying. I couldn't eat any lunch. And somebody said, "Look at Ware over there. He's praying!" Well, I was! I knew I had to show. I knew I was going to get beat. But I was praying. And so help me, two-thirty came, and we walked out, and we walked out the back of Central High School by the gym. And as we were walking by it, a couple of guys said, "Hey hey, before Jerry Lee and Ware fight, we just got a new anvil in here and nobody can pick it up, nobody. Let's see if they can pick it up." Kind of like a weigh-in before a fight. Well, I was lifting weights in those days. I didn't know anything about how to fight but I could lift a few weights. And I said, "Lord, help me get this thing up. Make me like Samson!" All I can tell

you is — it must have weighed a hundred and sixty pounds or seventy — all I can tell you is it went up. And then he tried. He drew his belt up, he blew, “oooh, oooh,” and he spit on his hands. I said, “Lord, don't let it come up! Don't let it come up!” And he tried and he tried and he tried and he cursed and he threatened and he threw it down. And he made some explanation about trying to get out of it and he just turned and walked away. I didn't have to fight him. I've got that anvil in there. But I've got it in there for another purpose!

I've got it in there for another purpose too. When I was in Columbia Seminary I represented First Presbyterian Church and John Reed Miller. The Columbia Seminary was trying to raise money for the seminary and this church took out \$50,000 dollars, worth about \$500,000 now, and he said, “We'll give it to you if you'll get some good men that would like to teach.” And that infuriated the seminary and they took it out on me, but it didn't bother me because I love this church and I knew what I believed. And I tried to convince the other fellows whose faith they were attacking, and they were attacking the Scriptures. I came upon a poem and I tried to give it to some of the other boys because it strengthened me as I was going through those days.

“Last eve I paused beside the blacksmith's door and heard the anvil ring the vesper chime. And looking in I saw upon the floor, old hammers worn with beating years of time. ‘How many anvils have you had’ said I, ‘to wear out those hammers so?’ ‘Just one,’ said he, ‘the anvil wears the hammers out you know.’ And so I thought, the anvil of God's Word, for ages skeptics blows have beat upon and though the sound of falling blows is heard, the anvil still remains, the hammers all gone.”

And it's true. The Word of God will be strong and powerful and saving. It will endure forever, and it's in your car and it's at home in your desk and it's in these pews and it's calling and begging and warning you to repent. Believe in God the Father and trust in His Son Jesus Christ and turn your life to Him. Submit control of your life to Him and you'll be saved.

May we pray.

We thank Thee, Lord Jesus, for Your love to us. We thank You for Your Word, Lord. How oft it saved us in times of trial and temptation. How often it's rebuked us and corrected us and has told us the way of salvation, Lord. Even in the Old Testament it's there, and we thank Thee for it. And we thank Thee, O Lord, that this church and the pastors we've had and our current pastor and this session have led the way in the formulation of the PCA and the seminary that stresses the inspiration and authority of Thy Word and its influence has spread throughout the ends of the earth and we thank Thee for it. May we be faithful unto death, Lord, to Thee and to Thy Word, and may we heed it while there is time, for Christ's sake. Amen.

I'm going to pronounce the benediction and then we'll sing this first stanza of "Once in Royal David's City." Would you stand?

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be and abide with you now and forevermore. Amen.

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