

A GREAT CHASM FIXED
Parable: Dives and the Beggar
Sermon 11
Lk 16:19-31

I. ILLUSTRATIONS

EVIL KNIEVEL (35 years old)—SNAKE RIVER CANYON JUMP

- **Sunday, 8 Sep 1974—3:36 pm (MDT)**
 - Two other events that day:
 - President Ford pardoned President Nixon
 - TWA flight 841—crashed into Ionian Sea after take-off from Athens—bomb—88 killed
- **West of Shoshone Falls, Idaho**
- **Length—1600 feet—[500 foot deep canyon]**
- **Skycycle X-2 by Doug Malewicki**
- **Steam-powered engine by Robert Truax—superheated to 500 degrees**
- **Drag chute deployed early**
- **Rocket made it over north rim—drifted back—fell into canyon**
- **Stuntman Eddie Braun—succeeded—16 Sep 2016**

II. SETTING AND SITUATION

1. **JESUS WAS STILL TEACHING—ON HIS WAY TO JERUSALEM**
2. **SPEAKING WITH SCRIBES AND PHARISEES—BEGINNING CHAPTER 15**
 - They criticized him for eating with sinners
 - He told 3 parables about ‘lost things’
 - God’s care for lost sinners and the Father’s great love
3. **PARABLE OF SHREWD MANAGER—FOUR LESSONS**
 - Ungodly people can be shrewder with their things than God’s people
 - One who is faithful with little things can be faithful with much
 - One who is unfaithful with earthly things, cannot be entrusted with eternal things
 - No one can serve two masters—you cannot serve both God and wealth
4. **STILL SPEAKING TO PHARISEES—WHO SCOFFED AT HIM**
 - They were lovers of money
 - They put their hope for heaven in keeping the Law
 - They called Abraham their father

5. CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

- Pharisees believed in heaven and hell—unlike Sadducees
- Wealth and prosperity—signified God’s blessing
- Poverty and chronic illness/disability—signified judgment for sin

III. BIBLICAL TEXT—Lk 16:19-31

Lk 16:19-31—**19** *Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. 20 And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, 21 and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man’s table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. 22 Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.’ 25 But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. 26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.’ 27 And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father’s house—28 for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ 29 But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ 30 But he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’ 31 But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’*

IV. EXPLANATION

A. BIBLICAL CONTEXT

1. NO PARALLEL PARABLE IN OTHER GOSPELS
2. ONLY PARABLE—THAT JESUS NAMES A CHARACTER—LAZARUS
3. MOST SINGULARLY TERRIFYING PARABLE JESUS EVER SPOKE
4. MUST BE READ IN LIGHT OF TWO DISTURBING PASSAGES
 - a. Lukan Beatitudes—more socially radical than Matthew’s Sermon on Mount

Lk 6:20-21—*Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.*

Lk 6:24-26—*But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now,*

for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.

- b. Jesus' rebuke of false disciples

Lk 13:27-30—*Depart from me you evil-doers. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out. . . . And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.*

B. THE PARABLE

1. THE GREAT DISPARITY

- a. **Rich man**—a **'winner'** in this life

- No name—traditionally = Dives = Latin for 'rich man'
- Dressed in purple—extremely costly—usually only for royalty
- Joyous and sumptuous living every day—hedonistic life of pleasure
- Probably had a magnificent funeral—with fine obituary and tributes

- b. **Poor man**—a **'loser'** in this life

1. Name—**Lazarus** = 'God is my helper'
2. Was laid at his gate—probably disabled—and carried by friends
 - Hopeless plight—destitute and unemployable
 - Absolute poverty—begging was his only option
 - Unclean—in the eyes of Pharisees
3. 'Lusting for'—'coveting'—crumbs from table
 - Bread—used to sop food and clean hands
4. Dogs licked his sores
 - Dogs were 'unclean' wild animals—scavengers
 - Did their licking give him relief—his only comfort?
 - Or were they a constant menacing threat—so weak he could not fend them off
5. Probably no obituary—nobody missed him—only the absence of dogs!

2. THE GREAT REVERSAL

- a. **Lazarus**—the **'winner'** after death

1. Glorious ascent—immediately carried by angels
 - No mention of burial—but taken directly to heaven!
2. Place of honor—embraced by Abraham
 - Abraham—is the friend of God—**Is 41:8**
 - Not only in heaven—but at the 'head table'!

- No longer under the table—begging for crumbs
 - 3. He who had only bad in life—then experienced only comfort in paradise
 - b. **Rich man**—the **'loser'** after death
 1. Was buried—not transported to heaven
 2. In hell—'Hades'
 - Place of torment—mentioned twice—**vv23, 28**
 - Place of agony—mentioned twice—**vv24, 25**
 3. Now reduced to being a beggar
 - Crying for mercy—**v24**
 - Begging on behalf of his brothers—**v27**
 4. He who had only good in life—then experienced only agony in hell
 - c. The last became first—and the first became last
 - The loser in life—became the winner in death
 - The winner in life—became the loser in death
3. THE GREAT CHASM—WAS FIXED
- Destiny could not be changed across this gulf
 - Comfort could not cross this gulf
 - Mercy could not cross this gulf
 - Intercession could not cross this gulf

C. FOUR MAIN POINTS

1. DEATH IS CERTAIN AND FINAL—WITH EVERLASTING CONSEQUENCES
 - a. Certainty of death—both men died—**v22**
 - Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment—**Heb 9:27**
 - b. Death seals our destiny permanently—**vv24-25**
 - There is **no mercy** on the other side
 - Mercy is available only in this life—later is too late
 - c. Everlasting consequences
 1. Wrong views
 - **Sadducees and Epicureans**—no annihilation
 - **Stoics**—no being absorbed into the World Soul
 - **Humanists/naturalists**—life is not just material—with no continuation
 - **Hindus and Buddhists**—no reincarnation
 - **Spiritualists**—cannot communicate with dead—or *vice versa*

➤ **Catholics**—no purgatory—with a future chance of paradise

2. Biblical view

➤ Our identifiable spiritual being continues—after physical death

➤ Either everlasting life in heaven—or everlasting agony in hell

2. HEAVEN AND HELL ARE REAL

a. The only reliable facts about the afterlife

- Found only in God's word—nothing else gives answers
- We can either believe or reject His testimony
- Their existence—or non-existence—cannot be proven by science or philosophy

b. Heaven

1. This parable states or implies three things

a. Stated—place of comfort—absence of earthly suffering

b. Implied

☆ Place of glory—Lazarus transported by angels

☆ Presence of God—with Abraham—God's friend

2. Other passages—tell us where we will be—in heaven

➤ With the Lord Jesus—**Ph 1:23**

➤ At home with the Lord—**II Cor 5:8**

➤ In the Father's house—**Jn 14:2**

c. Hell

1. Hades is **real**—**v23**

a. Imagery *might* be symbolic—but experience is real

☆ Not just a state of mind

☆ Not just a psychological invention to make people behave now

☆ Not just our present existence on earth—hell is worse than anything here

b. Eternal punishment—separated from God

c. Jesus Himself tells us more about hell than anyone else

☆ To doubt its existence—is to disbelieve His testimony

2. Hades is **terrible**—**vv23-25**

a. Not annihilation or unconsciousness

☆ Rich man is in torment—and agony

b. With these effects

☆ Psychological—Dives remembers and recognizes his reversal of fortunes

☆ Physical—great pain—and a great physical chasm is fixed

☆ Spiritual—permanent spiritual dying—morally aware he deserves it

3. Hades is **final**—v26

- Permanent—unchangeable destiny
- No gradation or relief
- No parole or ending of sentence
- No conditional immortality

4. Hell is **separation**—v26—**Great Chasm**

a. **No bridge long enough**

- ☆ **Danyang-Kushan Bridge—102 miles—Beijing-Shanghai rail line**
- ☆ **World's longest bridge—took 10,000 workers—4 years—\$8.5 billion**

b. **No material strong enough—the terrifying, swaying bridge**

- ☆ **Zhangjiajie Glass Bridge—over Chinese Grand Canyon**
- ☆ **1410 feet long—980 feet above ground—2-inch thick tempered glass**
- ☆ **Can drive a car over it—after being smashed with sledge-hammer**

3. WHY THE RICH MAN WENT TO HELL

a. **Three symptoms** in this passage—‘**three-selves**’

1. Self-indulgence

- He lived only for pleasure—no concern at all for the spiritual things of God

2. Selfishness

- He thought of nobody else—did not think about sharing with Lazarus

3. Self-sufficiency in wealth

- a. Jesus was speaking to Pharisees—who were ‘lovers of money’—v14
- b. Jesus warned—it is hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God—**Mk 10**
- c. Jesus had just said—you cannot serve both God and wealth—v13
- d. **But remember**—wealth by itself does not keep one from God
 - ☆ The **love** of money—not money itself—is the root of all evil
 - ☆ Abraham was one of the richest persons in his day

b. **Reasons**—are implied

1. **He did not rely** on God

- Notice—he did not cry out to God—but ‘Father Abraham’—v24
- Three times—he called on Abraham as ‘father’—not God
- Trusted his lineage—not relationship with God
- Like Pharisees—who saw salvation in ‘Father Abraham’—and the Law
- John Baptist said—Do not think you can say ‘We have Abraham as our Father’

2. **He blamed** others for his situation
 - Abraham—and God—had not done enough for him—**vv27-28**
 - Implied—if he had received help from the other side—he would have repented
 3. **He did not believe**
 - He did not listen to and believe God’s word—Moses and prophets—**v29**
 4. **He did not repent and obey—v30**
 - He admitted this by asking for Lazarus to be sent—so his brothers would **repent**
 - Moses and the prophets revealed enough to be saved—repent and obey God
 - Repent of the ‘three-selves’ that stood between him and God
 5. **He was arrogant—v30**
 - Even in hell—he dared to correct Abraham—“No, father . . .”
4. MIRACLES BY THEMSELVES DO NOT SAVE
- a. Two points are implied about the resurrection—**vv30-31**
 1. Even if Lazarus were resurrected and sent to them
 - The brothers would not believe
 - If they did not first believe and obey God’s word
 2. Jesus meant—when He was resurrected
 - The Pharisees would not believe
 - If they were not willing to believe and obey God’s word
 - b. Today—people who don’t believe and obey God’s word
 1. Will not be convinced by miracles
 2. Just like Israel did not listen and believe
 - After Exodus—refused to believe—**Nu 4**
 - Rebelled—when Elijah and Elisha performed miracles—**I Kgs 18** and **II Kgs 2**
 - Jesus’ miracles met with unbelief and efforts to kill Him—**Mt 11; Mk 3**
 - Religious leaders reacted against Lazarus’s resurrection—**Jn 11-12**
 - Leaders acknowledged ‘outstanding miracle’ but persecuted Apostles—**Acts 4**
 - Empty tomb continues to be rejected, just as in Jesus’ day—**Mt 28**
 - c. Miracles
 - Help people
 - Confirm word and messenger
 - Glorify God
 - But even these will not persuade people whose hearts are hardened to the truth

V. APPLICATION

1. DEATH IS CERTAIN AND FINAL
2. THERE ARE TWO DESTINIES AFTER THIS LIFE—HEAVEN OR HELL
3. AFTERWARD—A GREAT CHASM IS FIXED—THAT IS UNCROSSABLE
4. GOD’S MERCY IS AVAILABLE FOR SALVATION—ONLY ON THIS SIDE OF DEATH
5. THE ONLY BRIDGE THAT CAN SPAN THE CHASM—IS THE CROSS OF JESUS
6. SO—WE MUST ACT WITH UTMOST URGENCY
 - CALL UPON GOD’S MERCY AND SECURE OUR OWN EVERLASTING DESTINY
 - AND TELL OTHERS WITH THE SAME URGENCY—WE CAN BE LAZARUS!

VI. INVITATION

TIS SO SWEET TO TRUST IN JESUS

Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just to take Him at His Word;
Just to rest upon His promise,
And to know, “Thus saith the Lord!”

Refrain:

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him!
How I’ve proved Him o’er and o’er;
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!
Oh, for grace to trust Him more!

Oh, how sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just to trust His cleansing blood;
And in simple faith to plunge me
’Neath the healing, cleansing flood!

Yes, ’tis sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just from sin and self to cease;
Just from Jesus simply taking
Life and rest, and joy and peace.

I’m so glad I learned to trust Thee,
Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend;
And I know that Thou art with me,
Wilt be with me to the end.

SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD

Jonathan Edwards—Enfield, CN—8 July 1741

Their foot shall slide in due time—Dt 32:35

That world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone, is extended abroad under you. There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor anything to take hold of; there is nothing between you and hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up.

Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf, and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock. Were it not for the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you one moment.

There are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God, it would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, stays his rough wind; otherwise it would come with fury, and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff on the summer threshing floor.

The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose.

If God should only withdraw his hand from the flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood.

Thus all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God.

You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to

nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you was suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder . . .

. . . let everyone that is yet out of Christ, and hanging over the pit of hell, whether they be old men and women, or middle aged, or young people, or little children, now hearken to the loud calls of God's word and providence.

. . . let everyone that is out of Christ, now awake and fly from the wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over a great part of this congregation. Let everyone fly out of Sodom: "Haste and escape for your lives, look not behind you, escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed."