

Facing Eighteen:
Facing Forever
Luke 16:19-31

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Text Introduction: For a couple of weeks now we have been thinking about things that we face. We have talked about our future, our fears, and our sin. Today, I want us to think about our forever. We all face forever.

I want to turn with you to a parable today. Parable is a word used to identify a kind of teaching from Jesus. I have taught you before that parables are stories that we need not necessarily find a teaching in every detail of the story, but rather look to find the “one-point” in the story.

We will try to do that today.

Text: ¹⁹“There was a rich man who would dress in purple and fine linen, feasting lavishly every day. ²⁰But a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, was lying at his gate. ²¹He longed to be filled with what fell from the rich man’s table, but instead the dogs would come and lick his sores. ²²One day the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³And being in torment in Hades, he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off, with Lazarus at his side. ²⁴‘Father Abraham!’ he called out, ‘Have mercy 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 flame!’

²⁵“‘Son,’ Abraham said, ‘remember that during your life you received your good things, just as Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here, while you are in agony. ²⁶Besides all this, a great chasm has been fixed between us and you, so that those who want to pass over from here to you cannot; neither can those from there cross over to us.’

²⁷“‘Father,’ he said, ‘then I beg you to send him to my father’s house— ²⁸because I have five brothers—to warn them, so they won’t also come to this place of torment.’

²⁹“But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’

³⁰“‘No, father Abraham,’ he said. ‘But if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’

³¹“But he told him, ‘If they don’t listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.’”

Introduction: What is the point of this story?

Life is a series of choices. The reason that this is an important point is that hell is a choice. No one forces you to go to hell. You choose to go to hell by not choosing to believe in Christ in this life. As C.S. Lewis put it, “I willingly believe that the damned are, in one sense, successful rebels to the end.” Or as Max Lucado put it in this rhetorical question asked by so many, “How could a loving God send sinners to hell? He doesn’t. They volunteer.” (Max Lucado, *3:16—The Numbers of Hope*, p. 99.)

I'm going to ask you to make an important decision at the close of my message. I'm going to give you the choices now.

1. I am deciding today to follow Jesus Christ so that I will not go to hell.
2. I am already a follower of Jesus Christ because of that I am going to Heaven, not going to Hell, and will help others choose Heaven over Hell.
3. I still have questions.

To me—this is the greatest decision that you will ever make in your life. It is the decision by which all other questions in your future will be based. It is critical that we face this question.

What do we learn from this parable?

Here is a simple but incredibly important message.

Striving to make this parable as pointed and personal as possible, think with me about these 5 simple truths about forever.

1. We are all going to die.

The rich die. The poor die. Americans die. Africans die. Asians die. We all die. We can try to live longer, but we are going to die. You don't really need any elaboration or evidence from me, you know this by your own observation about life.

2. When we die, we will either go to Heaven or Hell.

Some want to believe just in Heaven. I've met a person or two that want to believe just in Hell. Many want to believe in neither. "When you die, you die" is their motto. But, both are real. Jesus spoke about both. So, if He has lied here, He has lied everywhere.

3. Once we die, the place of our eternal destiny is fixed forever.

There is no changing our forever place once we go.

4. Our eternal place is determined while we live.

For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. ²⁶ Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" John 11:25-26

If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. 1 John 5:11-13

You will notice in all of these Scriptures that this is not about what we do, but about believing in Jesus, trusting in Him as the One who is our Savior.

5. We don't want anyone to go to Hell.

Once we have decided that Jesus is the only way to Heaven, we have to be about the assignment of helping others to know that.

Once reconciled, we are to enter the ministry of reconciliation.

²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf: "Be reconciled to God." ²¹He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:20-21

So What?

- Decide Now
- Declare Now

Both are urgent!

Remember that decision that I am going to ask you to make?

1. I am deciding today to follow Jesus Christ so that I will not go to hell.
2. I am already a follower of Jesus Christ because of that I am going to Heaven, not going to Hell, and will help others choose Heaven over Hell.
3. I still have questions.