

“A glimpse of the other side.”

A guy was in the hospital on his death bed. The family called his preacher to be with him in his final moments. As the preacher stood by the bed, the guy's condition seemed to deteriorate, and so the man motioned for someone to quickly pass him a pen and paper. The preacher quickly got a pen and paper and lovingly handed it to him. But before he had a chance to read the note, the man died. The preacher feeling that now wasn't the right time to read it put the note in his jacket pocket. It was at the funeral while speaking that the preacher suddenly remembered the note.

Reaching deep into his pocket the preacher said “and you know what, I suddenly remembered that right before Marvin died he handed me a note, and knowing Marvin I'm sure it was something inspiring that we can all gain from”. With that introduction the preacher ripped out the note and opened it. The note said “hey, you are standing on my oxygen tube!”

So much is said about life after death that is bewildering and misleading and absolutely false. Philosophers, wise men and scholars have speculated for ages about life after death, but our Lord does not speculate, He knows. And He is equally at home in the realms of the seen and or the realms of the unseen.

And for this reason we have great confidence in coming to this wonderful, chilling and disturbing story, in **Luke 16:19-31**. **Colossians 2:9** says, “**For in Christ all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form**”. When Jesus spoke to His disciples before He faced the cross, He said something wonderful to them, He said in **John 14:1+2**, “**Do not let your heart be troubled, trust in God, trust also in me, in my Father's house there are many rooms, if it were not so I would have told you, I am going there to prepare a place for you.**”

I love this phrase, “**If it were not so, I would have told you, I would not allow you to believe this if it were false, no matter how comforting or reassuring it would be, I wouldn't let you believe it, if it were not the truth.**” Now this story in **Luke 16** is compelling, chilling and disturbing and it is a drama in **3 scenes**.

And when the curtain rises in the **1st scene**, we have a typical day in the lives of two men. Let's read **Luke 16:19-21** “**There was rich man who had been dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and lick his sores.**”

Jesus compels us to look at these two men, that's all. No words of comment on the character of either man, just a typical day. **And here is the 1st scene**. One of these men has got a lot going for them, he lives in a great house. Rooms possibly hung with the finest tapestries. He's possibly got rugs on the floor and the choicest products scattered throughout the house, we know he's got loads of money.

He had the kind of house that people on the street would admire when they walked past and think for a moment that maybe they lived there and they were their things. And you would walk by one day and you think to yourself, “**I would like to live in a house like that, I would like to have his resources. I would like to get in to that guy's shoes.**”

And these people are coming up and he's having a party or something and these people are coming up in their chariots. Some one horse chariots, some two horse chariots, others have got six horse chariots. And when these people are coming up they almost stumble at these rags, these dirty rags at the gate. They walk by on the path and realise there is somebody living out here, there is a man out here.

He's just a mess and looks awful and these wild street dogs are hanging around him and licking his sores. They too are starving, just exactly like that poor miserable beggar. Now remember the Jews used to wipe their hands with any leftover bread and throw in on the ground. That's why Jesus says, “**he longed to eat what fell from the rich man's table**”. So the rich man didn't even offer Lazarus the scraps from his table.

Now notice that Jesus has no word of condemnation for the rich man, just because he's got something, or is there any attempt to put a halo on the beggars head just because of his poverty and rags. There is a rich man here and that stands for power, the ability to serve. He's got the ability to do something good. And there is beggar at his gate and that stands for need, the beggar is the rich man's opportunity.

And this story is a tragedy because the two men never come together. Here is a chance for an able man to make a deposit for an eternity and he doesn't get it done at all. We don't even know if this rich man ever sees this beggar at all, it doesn't say anything about whether he noticed him or took note of him or had anything to do with him.

Now maybe he's busy with his affairs; he's got a lot of things to sort out. He's not unkind to the guy, he doesn't have him stoned, or have him thrown into prison. He just leaves him alone; he never does anything; he doesn't take any notice of him what so ever.

And then the 1st scene is over, and when the 2nd scene begins, we are into a familiar scene. **Luke 16:22 "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried."** It is a scene of death. And we know about death, especially those of you who have lived a while. We never get used to death; we never get used to funeral services and that's because we are of life, not of death and it is hard for us to endure it. The beggar dies and notice it doesn't say anything about his body being buried.

You see in New Testament times there would be a group people who were employed to walk around the streets of Jerusalem at night to pick up any one who had died on the streets. They would basically place the body on a cart and take them to place called Gehenna just outside the city walls.

But imagine the people that used to walk by, they would be asking each other, **"What happened to that old beggar that used to be out here?"** And someone would answer, **"I don't know, I guess he is out of his misery, I guess he died."** The beggar is gone and everybody says, **"Well it is a blessing, he's out of his misery, he doesn't have to suffer any more."**

Nobody gets very upset about it; nobody is very disturbed about it but then they pick up the newspaper the next morning and there it is. This guy, this guy who had it all, this big community leader, this guy with all the money and everything, he died. And people begin to think, **"Well he was pretty young"** and they try to figure out just how old he was.

But he dies and it startles them because they remember just a few days ago, they went by his house and said, **"I wish I lived there, I wish I were in his shoes."** But now they are saying, **"Lord don't hear my prayers, just ignore that prayer for that."** **"I've changed my mind on that one Lord, I don't want to be in his shoes."**

And for one rare moment, they face the realisation that you can't live, not really live through materialism, because it has no power in our lives. Rich people die just like poor people do. And this guy who they were envying and wishing they were in his shoes is dead this morning. In spite of his beautiful home, in spite of all his money. One day, he's gone and everybody in town is concerned about it. It is a death scene.

And then we enter the 3rd scene, this is the world unseen. This is some place we don't know much about because we haven't been there before. But notice how naturally Christ passes from the seen to the unseen. And now we begin to walk in a world where we have never walked before, never been there ourselves. And we begin to learn some things, very important things about life after death.

Luke 16:23+24 "In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. 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.'"

There are **5 principals** I would like to share with you.

1. The dead are still alive. I realise sometimes we speak and the Bible speaks about going to sleep in the Lord and that's true and the physical body is sleeping but the dead are consciously and vividly alive. They are not asleep, they are not unconscious, but they are consciously alive. This was true of Lazarus and it was true of the rich man.

Notice the text says that the rich man was in torment and in agony, he looked and saw Abraham and Lazarus, he spoke to Abraham and he was thirsty. The both of them were very much alive. And remember speaking of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the **Mark 12**, saints that have passed into the unseen, Jesus did not count them as dead. **Do you remember that?** In fact, He clearly declares in **Mark 12:27** that, **"God is not the God of the dead but of the living"**.

And when Jesus is hanging on that cross, one of the men by His side prayed in [Luke 23:42](#), “Lord, remember me when you come in your kingdom”. Remember the thief by Him? And Jesus replied by giving this dying man a promise in [Luke 23:43](#), “Today you will be with me in paradise.”

[What does this promise mean?](#) It means that Jesus and the dying robber are going to meet in the paradise of God, that very day. Not some distant time in the future but that very day they are going to be consciously alive, they are both going to be conscious of each other.

Just as a side note, we don't have to wonder or speculate where Jesus went when he died, or where he was when He was in grave, the text clearly tells us where he was going. [Revelation 6:9](#) “When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.”

Now the reason I wanted us to look at this text is simply to show you that the soul does exist after death. So death is not just an unconscious sleep for so many hundreds or thousands of years. We are consciously alive beyond the grave, that's what Jesus teaches here and other passages, we are still alive after death.

[2. The dead are conscious of being themselves.](#) [Luke 16:25](#) “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.’”

Just as Abraham was still Abraham, the rich man and Lazarus were still the rich man and Lazarus. And both the rich man and Lazarus were very much conscious of still being themselves. Now you might think, “Well that's no big deal”. Well, yes, it is a big deal.

You see at death we are going to lose some things; we are going to lose the physical. We are going to lose these bodies of ours and the possessions we have. Death can rob me of the material things and the physical things but it can't take anything else away from us.

It cannot rob us of ourselves, it cannot do that. Yesterday I was myself; I will be myself tomorrow, I will continue to be myself as long as heaven is heaven and as long as God is God. I'm myself from now on but I've got to give up this body someday.

You see these bodies of ours are here today and gone tomorrow. And there is something you've got to know about your body, your body is in the process of change. You're getting older and your body over a period of 7 years replaces every cell that it has got. It has been going on from the day you were born and will continue until the day you die. I have had six new bodies and I get another new one in two years' time.

And I know that there are some people in here who have had a lot more than I have. But it didn't work any change in us at all, [did it?](#) It changed every single cell in our bodies but we are still the same person. Death is not going to work any moral change in us. [Did you hear that?](#) Oh no! Because you hear these stories all the time where people just live any way they like and all of a sudden they sprout wings and get a halo and float around in heaven and all those things. As though death has some kind of hocus-pocus power to cleanse us and empower us to do something for us.

Loved ones, don't expect the undertaker to do something for you, which you won't allow Christ to do for you here and now because it is not going to happen, the undertaker hasn't got any power. Death cannot and will not work any kind of moral change in us, it just doesn't happen.

Now that is a little frightening to me because sometimes, I don't like me very much. [Do you know what I mean?](#) Sometimes there are things in my life that I'm not very pleased about but I'm going to have to live with me from now on. And we are all going to have to do that; we are all going to have to remain the same. If I learn anything from these words of Jesus, I learned that, sometimes we have to live with us, and sometimes it's not a very pleasant thing to have to live with ourselves.

God wants to change us through His Son, but we're going to be ourselves from now on and death isn't going to change who we are.

3. The dead remember. Luke 16:25 “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.’”

A few old couples used to get together to talk about life and to have a good time. One day one of the men, Harry, started talking about this fantastic restaurant he went to the other night with his wife. “Really?” one of the men said, what’s it called? After thinking for a few seconds the Harry said, “What are those good smelling flowers called again?” “Do you mean a rose? The first man questioned. “Yes that’s it,” he exclaimed. Looking over at his wife he said, “Rose what’s that restaurant we went to the other night?”

And I guess the point is that we may forget things in old age but we won’t forget anything in the afterlife. Abraham asks the rich man to remember, his life and all the good things he had. Look at Luke 16:27+28 “He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’”

The rich man remembers the life he used to live, he remembers his selfishness, his sin. He remembers his lost opportunity and his brother’s back there. You see loved ones; memory is either going to help intensify the joys of heaven or it will embitter the pains of hell. It’s got to be that way because it can’t be any other way. Matthew 12:36 “But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every empty word they have spoken.”

And if you think about it, how can God judge anyone if they don’t know why they are being judged? How can God judge anyone if they can’t remember anything that they’ve said or done whilst they were still alive? In other words, those souls in heaven will know exactly why they are in heaven and those souls who end up in hell will know exactly why they are in hell. Everyone will remember who they are and they will remember what they did or didn’t do whilst they were alive here on Earth.

4. All men do not have the same destiny. Luke 16:26 “And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.”

These two men didn’t have the same destiny, the text tells us they are separated by a great gulf. But who separated them? God! No way. I believe these men separated themselves by the deliberate choices they made in this life, they separated themselves, so don’t blame this on God. They become morally separated by a gulf that is as wide as right is from wrong, as night is from day and it’s a separation that continues from beyond the grave.

Now remember Luke 16:22 says that, “Lazarus was carried by the angels into Abraham’s side.” Not because in this life he was unfortunate or sick or neglected. He was carried into paradise because in spite of all these calamities, he made a deliberate choice of God, his name signifies, “God is my help”.

And it was this right choice that made him a right character and the right character that made for a glorious spiritual destiny. And the rich man is not lost because he’s rich, because he had good clothes, because he ate good food, he was ruined by wrong choices. He made a deliberate choice of things that were seen and he turned his back on God.

Now you might say, “Wait a minute it doesn’t say a word in there about the rich man turning his back on God”. Well, how do I know he did that? I know he turned his back on God because he turned his back on Lazarus and Lazarus was his opportunity right there. Matthew 25 has some very important things to say on this matter where Jesus says in verse 40, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.”

He didn’t do anything for Lazarus and Lazarus was his chance. God has only one way of reaching men and it is through His Son. By believing in Him, responding to God’s grace and love through His Son Jesus Christ. And if we do not hear Him and if we do not receive Him, we will not be saved, it’s as simple as that.

So Lazarus found himself lying against Abraham’s side, which is the Hebrew way of saying that he was in the paradise of God. And while Lazarus was comforted, the rich man was tormented. But why? Why this heaven or hell? Well it’s certainly not because God loved one of them and didn’t love the other one.

Their different destinies were the incredible outcome of their different character. Their different life style, who they were, who they believed in, who they placed their confidence and hope in, their different choices. **2 Corinthians 5:10** says, **“For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done in the body, whether good or bad.”**

Now that is a tough verse, but it's true. The truth of the matter is that God doesn't have a way of getting anybody into heaven, if they have hell in their hearts. And that's the whole point Jesus is getting at. If we go all the way back to **Luke 15:1+2** we find a religious group of people called Pharisees and Scribes listening to what Jesus was saying.

And when some tax collectors and sinners joined the crowd the Pharisees and Scribes criticised Him for having anything to do with them. They regarded such people as the lowest of the low, beyond the reach of salvation, not worth bothering with, to be kept at more than arm's length. Many of the Jews believed that if they had accumulated enough wealth and upped their social status and got into prominent positions in the religious community, then that proved that they were under the blessing of God.

They also thought, according to their logic, that those who were poor were under the curse of God. And so Jesus is using an everyday event to make His point. There were rich people in their houses and there were poor people, even beggars walking around the streets every day. And Jesus is telling them that just because you guys are well off and have high positions in the Jewish religion doesn't necessary mean you are right with God.

5. The living can't mix with the dead. Now you also need to realise that you cannot mix the living with the dead. You can't mix them and you can't do it in this life. When the rich man wanted Abraham to send Lazarus back to warn his family and his brothers, **Luke 16:29-31** tells us that **“Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’ ‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ ‘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.’”**

That's why I find it very disturbing when you get all these so called mediums and spiritualists who claim they can speak to the dead. You never hear of any dead person telling their loved ones, **“hey you better believe there is a God, because where I am right now, you don't want to come here.”**

You see, when we lose a loved one in death, we know we can't keep them, we have to put them in the place of the dead; you have to go to the cemetery. You can't do it physically, you can't mix the living and the dead. And it's the same with eternity, you can't mix the living with the dead.

Now I want to tell you one thing about hell, I don't know much about it, but I will tell you this. Whatever hell may be, it is a burying ground of dead souls, souls that are dead in trespass and sin. And forever you are going to live, you are created into the image of God and indwelt with a soul that lives forever.

And so there is something really special about you. Forever you are going to be yourself, and you are going to have to keep house with yourself for all eternity. And forever we are going to have to enjoy or suffer our destiny that we have created in this life. Whether it is through the grace of God to love and embrace His son, our saviour, and live with Him and be created anew by His Spirit.

Or whether we are going go on our own and turn our back on God and on His son and live for the day, live for the material things, live for how much we can store up and stash away. But remember this, even though some are lost, no one has to be lost. Jesus says in **John 6:37**, **“Whoever comes to me, I will never drive away.”**

I hope and pray this morning that wherever you are in your life, you will seriously consider this matter. I know this is not a very fun study in the **16th chapter of Luke**. I know it's a little chilling and disturbing for us to face, really these thoughts of eternity and what is going to happen to us. But I hope and pray that you will seriously contemplate these matters and decide that you will do everything in your power to be God's man, God's woman. God's boy, God's girl. That you will serve Him in His kingdom and that you will love His Son. That you will make your life something special, in purity, in commitment and have the assurance of God's salvation.