



I want to remind us at the beginning of this sermon the point of this series: that we would behold God in his glory! And what is God's glory? Well, each week I've preached, I've read from Exodus 34, so I'm going to read it again: ⁵**The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.** ⁶**The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,** ⁷**keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."** ⁸**And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped.**¹ The Lord descended and declared his name, meaning his glory! His glory, the expression of who he is, is that he is merciful, slow to anger, and forgiving. He also will not clear the guilty and will punish humanity for their sins.

As I think about these verses I'm reminded of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and how C.S. Lewis describes God. In this series, the lion, Aslan, represents Jesus. I want you to hear a portion of a conversation describing Aslan. When a girl named Susan speaks with Mr. Beaver about Aslan, this is what we discover.

"Aslan is a lion- the Lion, the great Lion." "Ooh" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he-quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion"... "Safe?" said Mr Beaver ... "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you." (The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe; Lewis)

Is God safe? Is Jesus safe? Interesting verbiage here, isn't it? I think by "safe," Lewis means that we can just come into the presence of Jesus essentially as equals. We need not fear him at all. But is that Jesus? No. He's so powerful, so holy, so wondrous that there is a holy fear and awe of him. But Jesus is also good so we can come into his presence and find mercy and grace if we approach him in dependence and repentance.

Lewis' description of Jesus is very different from modern, secular descriptions (and even many descriptions in church). By some, Jesus is the cleaned up rendition of the God of the Old Testament. Jesus is gracious. God is angry. For others, Jesus only addresses the sins of our enemies, but never addresses our sins. For others, Jesus just came to change politics and government. But by so many, Jesus is a guy who simply communicated grace to anyone. And, by grace, I mean an almost unconditional acceptance no matter what you do.

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ex 34:5–8.

But what does John write about Jesus at the beginning of his gospel? In John 1:14, we read, “¹⁴ **And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**”² Grace *and* truth. Isn’t that just shorthand for Exodus 34? Merciful and gracious and also the Judge. Grace *and* truth.

So, last week, Jonathan embarked on one of Jesus’ parables, revealing God’s glory through the parable of the wedding feast. Today, I’m going to another story that Jesus tells. In this story we see that Jesus isn’t like the “god” that this world makes him out to be. He certainly isn’t safe. He’s all-powerful and all-glorious. But he is so very good. In his goodness, he addresses human hearts. In so doing, I think he confronts us with our need and calls each person to turn away from self-trust and self-righteousness and to trust Jesus and be reconciled to God. To behold God’s glory and to rest in him.

With all this said, the main idea of the sermon today is: **God’s glory (i.e. – mercy and condemnation) will be on perfect display in the life to come.** As you hear that, I want to clarify that God’s glory is revealed to us as he judges humanity. In other words, what does “mercy” look like? Well, let’s see how he shows it to certain people. What does condemnation look like? Let’s see how he punishes someone who rebels. This is exactly what takes place in the story we’re looking at this morning.

Many people refer to it as a parable; however, I’m not convinced it’s a parable. I actually think it’s a true story. The reason I think this is because no other parable gives names of people. This is the only one that does. That doesn’t necessarily mean this *isn’t* a parable, but I think it strongly suggests that Jesus is giving us insight into the spiritual realm. He’s showing us the reality that we don’t see. And, oh how we need to see this reality. We live in a society that tries to ignore anything metaphysical or spiritual. As a result, we think reality only consists of what we see, and we numb ourselves to eternity. In the story Jesus tells, he moves the veil between the physical and spiritual and shows us the realms that await every single human being.

The story we’re going to look at today comes from Luke 16, and before we talk about the story, we have to have a little context. If you have your Bibles, turn to Luke 16, and I want to read verses 13-15: ¹³ No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.” ¹⁴ The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. ¹⁵ And he said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”³

Jesus shows us that we can serve money and stuff with the same fervency that someone ought to love and serve God. Did you know that? It shouldn’t be hard to imagine. Do you ever buy things in order to feel better? Have you ever seen a child melt in a store because they can’t have a toy? Do you feel safe if you have a large savings account, and does your faith in God waver when your savings is depleted? Do you live for money or stuff? In Luke 16, we see that Jesus is confronting the Pharisees who, while religious and disciplined, they loved money. As a result, when they heard Jesus’ teaching about money, they made fun of Jesus. I can imagine them being like myself when I hear convicting things about money. I could say, “Is Jesus saying it’s a sin to have money?” Or, “He’s just jealous because he doesn’t

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 1:14.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Lk 16:13–15.

have money.” Have you ever said things like this about others when you are convicted about your attachment to stuff and money?

Whatever the Pharisees were saying, Jesus gets to the heart. He says they’re just trying to justify themselves before people, but God knows their hearts. This word for “justify” is a very important biblical word. It refers to being declared righteous. The Pharisees do things and act in certain ways in order to have humans declare that they must be righteous. Again, we can relate to that tendency, can’t we? Do you ever order your life in such a way that you hope people will affirm you as being very godly? It’s not wrong to want to do right. But what’s your motive? Are you living for people’s declaration or God’s? Right here, Jesus confronts the Pharisees, and maybe some here today. In essence, Jesus is saying that you can fool people, but you can’t fool God. He knows your heart. Just because humans look up to certain things and value certain things doesn’t mean God values it. **Don’t put your trust in money, stuff, or people’s affirmation of you. Don’t self-justify. Look for God to declare you righteous.**

With this backdrop, we can get to the story. Go down to verse 19, and we’ll read through verse 21: ¹⁹ “There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰ And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹ who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.⁴

Jesus is showing us two people who are complete opposites. The titles he gives them emphasizes their differences:

Rich Man	Poor Man
No name	Lazarus
Purple/Fine Linen Clothes	Covered in sores
Feasted sumptuously	Desired to be fed with the rich man’s crumbs (like a dog), but ended up feeding dogs with his sores

Do you see how different these people are? Now, think of this from a societal perspective. Have you seen people in poverty? Have you walked in Holland or Chicago or Baltimore or New York City and seen poverty-stricken individuals? How do we generally think about the poor? What judgments do you have internally? Do you think, “They brought it on themselves” (and then excuse yourself from having to think about helping them)? Do you just think about something else? But look at how God cares for the poor man. Notice that God doesn’t even mention the name of the rich man, but the name of the poor man is given. God shows his care for Lazarus. While the rich man wouldn’t give him the time of day, God knows his name!

Now, this rich man had ample opportunity to think about Lazarus because this poor man was at the gate of his household. Yet, they lived very different lives. At this point, I want you to think about how this story can be culturally relevant to us. Of course, we can think about how we are godly neighbors to the poor. But I think this story emphasizes the weak and vulnerable in society. For example, how do we think about children and help to show care for children in society and our own homes? What about children in the womb? We look at how even our state is wanting to ensure that abortion is fully available. How are we not only seeking to work against that tide, also showing the love of Jesus towards pregnant women and vulnerable children? Who else can be considered vulnerable by society? Who are

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Lk 16:19–21.

the people that society can look down on? Maybe it's migrant workers perhaps? Ask yourself who you might automatically judge as less, and yet you know God loves them dearly and cares for them.

Now, is it true that those human beings are less valuable in the sight of God? No! They're created in his image, and Jesus came to reconcile all types of people to God – including me and you! We see this in the next part of the story. Let's continue reading verses 22-23: ²²The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, ²³and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.⁵ Let's notice more contrast:

Rich Man	Poor Man
Died	Died
Buried	Carried by angels
In Hades, in torment	To Abraham's side, comforted

The only two similarities we find with these people are **1) they are both men, which means they're human, and 2) they both die.** These two things are certain for all of us in this room. We are human and we will all die. The way Jesus tells this story, we feel the weight. We don't so much wonder what kind of life we had in this life, but we are left wondering what will happen to us after we die. You get that feeling right? Who cares if you ate sumptuously and lived a life of luxury if for eternity you are tormented? This goes back to what Jesus said to the Pharisees. You can live a life that this world looks up to, but God knows each person's heart. All the food, clothes, lifestyle choices that look righteous can't fool God. It may fool us, but not God. In addition, this story comforts because if you're someone who experiences weakness and vulnerability and you might feel like God has forgotten you and doesn't care, know that "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all."⁶

This story hits us right where we're at. Before going further, let me ask you, **do you live life for the praise and attention of people, and find a sense of self-justification when people approve of you? Do you trust people's evaluation do you trust God's evaluation of you? You cannot serve God and man or money.** Now, please hear me. I don't believe that any of us can say we perfectly trust God or that we never think more about people's thoughts of us than God. But I do believe God teaches us that his children will grow in trusting him and not living merely for the approval of people. So, think about the direction of your life. Who do you look to? God or man? God or money? What has your affections and attention? How you answer this has eternal consequences. Let's continue reading the story, reading verses 24-31: ²⁴And 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.' ²⁵But 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. ²⁶And 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.' ²⁷And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— ²⁸for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' ²⁹But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' ³⁰And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' ³¹He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.' " ⁷

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Lk 16:21–23.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 34:18–19.

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Lk 16:24–31.

Lazarus is at the side of Abraham. He's in paradise. He's given attention by the patriarch, and he's comforted. How amazing. This reminds me of the apostle Paul's words that say the trials of this life aren't worth comparing to the glories that are going to be revealed. All the trials fade away when we are in glory. Glory is *that* glorious. Do you see the mercy of God, Ventura? When we think of ourselves, our weaknesses, our sins. Whether we're rich or poor, we can see how we don't deserve this. We can't earn God's comfort and acceptance, but if we are justified by God, we will be eternally accepted into God's glory! This is mercy. This is God's glory on display.

I say it this way because of the conversation the rich man has with Abraham. He cries out saying, "have mercy on me." Mercy, kindness, grace. The rich man is at least stating he doesn't deserve kindness, but then what follows is shocking, horrifying and actually so scary to me. Do you notice *how* the rich man speaks? He knew Lazarus, and how does he treat Lazarus? He assumes Abraham should treat Lazarus like a slave. Do you see it? Send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in the water and cool my tongue. The rich man is still living with worldly values even in Hell. In the place where he is experiencing the consequences of his own sin, he's still embracing his sinful mentality. And he emphasizes his pain. He's in anguish in this flame. The torment of hell is real. It's so intense he just wants a millisecond of relief on his tongue. Anything would be valued.

This short sentence reveals that Hell is a place that is only death. Remember what I've said in previous weeks in this series. God is Life, and if we reject God, we reject Life. You cannot have Life if you reject Life. Therefore, Hell is Death. It's the absence of any grace and mercy. Now, before you get angry with God about this (and I hope you don't), I want you to see more of how this rich man reacts. Abraham tells him that God has made it impossible for anyone to travel between the two places. This should bring encouragement to the believer, like Lazarus, because no sinner, no abuser, no tormenter, will ever be able to torment us again. But this angers the rich man. On earth, the rich man could try to create his own reality while ignoring God. But in Hell, God will not allow you to ignore him any longer. You cannot live as though he doesn't exist. God creates this chasm. There's no way for you to go beyond God's borders. So, the rich man acts as though he's got a caring heart and tells Abraham what to do. This is crazy to me. The rich man seems to just want to have some kind of control. He's like Jacob who continued to "heel-grab," right? In Hell, you never stop trying to do this. That's what we see with this man. It's pitiable. He tells Abraham to send Lazarus to his family to warn them of this place, and yet Abraham responds that they have the Scripture that warns them.

Do you hear that response? The Bible is sufficient. God's Word warns us, but the rich man says God isn't doing enough. Isn't that how people are today, too? Oh, how I pray that's not you today! I pray you'd listen to the Word. But notice what the rich man says, "No!" The rich man believes he has a better idea than God. He's arguing with Abraham. But who's in Hell? What does this say of people in Hell? They're still bound in their sinfulness. They still trust themselves and not God. Then Abraham makes this profound statement and Jesus ends the story with this: , 'if they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.' " We who live on this side of the cross and resurrection get Jesus' point. Abraham is pointing to Jesus Christ's resurrection. Will the Pharisees let go of their sinfulness and self-justification? Will they trust Jesus once he rises from the dead?

So, what about you? We hear this story and it's sobering. But I hope you see that Jesus tells this story of God's condemnation and judgment in order to comfort those who trust him and to call people to trust him. God's design is that you would find rest in him. How do I know that? Jesus says "Come to me, all

who are weary. . .and I will give you rest.” And I know you could find rest for your soul in him if you turned to him because Jesus did rise from the dead. And that resurrection affirmed that on the cross, he took the punishment that our sins deserved. God tells us in his Word that God’s judgment would come down on the Messiah – our sin placed on him – so that the Messiah could give us his righteousness. That’s justification. That’s God’s justification. Have you experienced that? Have you received it? I know many of us have! We someday will be comforted for all eternity, and oh how we long for everyone we know to have confidence that they will have God’s eternal comfort through his justification. So, do *you* trust Jesus?

If you refuse to trust him, though, you will face an eternity left to yourself. Many years ago, I read someone’s comments on this parable, and I want you to hear what this author wrote about hell based on this parable: . . .hell is simply one’s freely chosen identity apart from God on a trajectory into infinity. We see this process “writ small” in addictions to drugs, alcohol, gambling, and pornography. First, there is disintegration, because as time goes on you need more and more of the addictive substance to get an equal kick, which leads to less and less satisfaction. Second, there is the isolation, as increasingly you blame others and circumstances in order to justify your behavior. “No one understands! Everyone is against me!” is muttered in greater and greater self-pity and self-absorption. When we build our lives on anything but God, that thing – though a good thing – becomes an enslaving addition, something we *have* to have to be happy. Personal disintegration happens on a broader scale. In eternity, this disintegration goes on forever. There is increasing isolation, denial, delusion, and self-absorption. When you lose all humility you are out of touch with reality. No one ever asks to leave hell. The very idea of heaven seems to them a sham (*The Reason for God*, Keller, p. 78).

According to this parable, and the Bible’s teaching is that Hell isn’t full of people who feel sorry and want out. It’s full of people who are finally given over to their sinfulness and are bound in their own sins – and they can’t hide from God’s perfect justice towards them. Revelation even speaks of the sinner still sinning. Oh, if you haven’t trusted in Christ, would you turn to him today? **Certainly Jesus isn’t “safe,” but he is so very good because, for those who trust, there’s righteousness, mercy and comfort. God’s glory (i.e. – mercy and condemnation) will be on perfect display in the life to come. Would you choose life and experience grace? Or, would you choose to trust yourself?**