

A Message From A Dead Man

Have you ever considered what someone who has died is experiencing? We get some insight into this in Luke 16:19-31. There, Jesus tells about two men who died (one rich and one poor) and experienced a conscious existence in Hades (the realm of the dead). Particularly, the story focuses on the rich man, who experienced great torment that he could not escape after he died. Such is the place many have gone when they have died because they have not faithfully served God. And, just like the rich man desired to warn his brothers who were still alive, those you have known who find themselves in this place would desire for you also to be warned! Consider some warnings from the Scriptures that fit with what someone who is now experiencing torment in the afterlife would want you to know and urge you to heed.

1) “Your earthly possessions are worthless.” “I’d give everything back to have another chance.” The rich man had much from a physical perspective (Luke 16:19), but was now experiencing eternal regret as he saw the true value of how he had lived (Luke 16:25). So, he would challenge you to think about what you’re really living for and tell you there will be a time when you’d gladly give it all back to have another chance to have the right focus in life. “Nothing and no one is worth sacrificing your soul for.” While he probably thought he was being successful in his life, he failed to value his soul in the way he should (Matthew 16:26-27). So, he would want you to realize that if you lose your soul so as to spend eternity in torment, you will have lost the only thing that truly matters. “All that I had was only temporary.” The reason the soul is of such greater value than all the physical things of life is because the physical things are temporary while the spiritual things are eternal (Matthew 6:19-21;

Ecclesiastes 1:2; 1 Timothy 6:7). The only true purpose in life is to fear God and keep His commands (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

2) “Prepare yourself for death.” “You will die.” While we do not know how old the rich man was or how he died, we do know that he died – just as the poor man and everyone will experience (Hebrews 9:27). So, you must recognize that you have an appointment with death in the future (and that it could be today). “Your life is short.” Whether someone lives 20 or 100 years, the time people have on earth is short in comparison with the length of eternity (James 4:13-16; Psalm 90:10). So, you must not sacrifice your eternity for a few short years of pleasure on earth. “There is something beyond death you must prepare for.” The rich man experienced a conscious existence after death in torment in Hades (Luke 16:23). So, you must carefully consider what you want to experience after death and where you want to spend your eternity (2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:46). “What you do during your life matters.” Just as the rich man experienced consequences for his choices in life, we will all reap eternally what we sow during life (Luke 16:25; Galatians 6:7-8). So, the rich man would urge you to realize that living for earthly things results in being eternally punished. “You don’t want to come here.” Since he could see Lazarus being comforted (Luke 16:23), the rich man recognized that people did not have to come to that place (which is only the “waiting place”). So, he would warn that if you really knew what it was like, you would not want anything to do with it (Luke 16:27-31). “Do everything you can not to come here.” The rich man would desperately plead with you to recognize the seriousness of every decision and beg you to live so as not to come to where he is. So, you must not waste your opportunity to be saved through Jesus Christ (John 3:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Hebrews 5:9).

3) “Help others prepare for death.” “Tell others they do not have to come here.” After realizing his own situation (Luke 16:24), the rich man’s thoughts turned to his brothers who were still living on earth and wanted them to avoid this place (Luke 16:27-31). So, the rich man would want you to share the message of salvation through Jesus Christ with as many people as possible. “It’s up to you to warn them.” The rich man wanted others to know this message but could not tell anyone (Luke 16:29-31). So, he would urge you to recognize your role in sharing this message of truth with others so they could hear, believe, and obey this powerful, soul-saving, eternity-changing message that has been entrusted to your hands (Romans 1:16; Mark 16:15-16; 2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 2 Corinthians 5:18-6:2). “Please, have compassion on them.” The rich man knew how easy it was to get caught up in things about this life and spend time on many things that don’t really matter. So, he would plead with those who have heard, believed, and obeyed the gospel to have a heart of compassion toward and make those who are headed for an eternal punishment they do not have to experience so as to make the necessary sacrifices to help them be saved (Matthew 9:35-38; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Jude 1:22-23)!

Jesus’s story about the rich man and Lazarus shows the end result of a life lived without the Lord. This serves as a warning for each person living today! But, it’s not just the rich man who would want you to know these things. It’s anyone who has died outside the Lord – including any of your loved ones in that condition. They would love another chance; but they will not get one. So, they would plead with you to make the most of yours!

Thought Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Teaching: What are some key lessons learned from this lesson?

Rebuking: What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

Correcting: How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

Training & Equipping: How can you apply this teaching to be trained in righteousness and equipped for every good work?