

Guest preacher - Mr Donald M Mackinnon

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Preacher: Mr. Donald M Mackinnon

[0 : 00] This morning I want to look with you at the passage of Scripture we read in Luke chapter 16 and from verse 19 onwards.

This section that if you're using an ESV Bible you will see as a title, The Rich Man and Lazarus. And I just want to particularly focus on the words that we have in verse 22 onwards.

The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. And in heads or in hell, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes.

And particularly, as I say, focusing on these words and in heads or in hell. The reason we read chapter 15 and the first two words there is because it reminds us of a recurring theme that was to be found and can be found running all the way through the earthly ministry of Christ.

And that is the opposition of the Pharisees to Jesus. The opposition of the Pharisees was fueled by two of the most powerful human emotions.

[1 : 29] First of all, they hated, with an almost perfect hatred, they hated the ministry of Jesus.

Because it so challenged them. It so exposed them for what they were. And for that, they absolutely hated Jesus.

But I think an even more powerful emotion than that fueled the Pharisees' opposition. And that was the emotion of jealousy.

Because they were simply outraged and incensed to see how, as they said in one place, the whole world has gone after him.

Where they had had such a controlling influence in their day. Now that was being so weakened by the ministry of Christ.

[2 : 26] And there in verse 2 of chapter 15, that hatred is just spat out by them. That jealousy just flows out of their mouth.

This man, with all contempt, this man receives sinners. And yet, little did they know what they said.

When the great C.H. Spurgeon read that for the first time, he was absolutely astounded by what he read.

This is what he said. In their zeal to find fault with him. They uttered that which has ever remained his highest praise.

In their criticism of him. This man receives sinners. They left for every sinner that would read these words. One of the most precious pearls that a sinner can have from the word of God.

[3 : 39] What is your justification for coming to Christ? Your justification for coming to Christ is this. This man receives sinners. And there is so much contained in what they said.

Of some verses in Scripture, it is said that they contain the Bible in miniature. Such can be said, I believe, of this verse. Because, and we're not going to stay here long.

I just want to set this out as a battle before we come to 16. But even what they said, briefly looking at it. This man. Who is this man? This man.

Well, if you want to begin to explain who this man is, you have to go all the way back to the beginning of Genesis. Right into the garden. Right into the point of the fall. And the first chink of light of hope for a fallen man.

The fall has taken place. And God comes in and gives that wonderful, wonderful statement. The seed of the woman. The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.

[4 : 54] Who is the seed of the woman? The seed of the woman is this man. And there in the garden, the fall just having taken place, it sets out for us. It shows us the willingness of God to save sinners.

Even there in the garden, this cataclysmic event that took place in the history of this world, there in the garden in the fall, you have the first intimation of grace, the first intimation of mercy.

This man, here is the man. And in the fullness of time, the man came from heaven to earth. What we call the incarnation. Something that each and every one of us ought often to reflect upon.

Some of the greatest minds in the church spent a great, great deal of meditation on the incarnation. I'm just going to give you two quotes from two great minds in the church.

Thomas Watson. This is what Thomas Watson, as he thought about how that promise in the garden was fulfilled. This astonishing event where the seed of the woman became manifested in the world.

[6 : 11] In the creation, he says, man was made in God's image. We're all familiar with that teaching in Genesis. In the incarnation, God was made in man's image.

Do you see the reverse? In the beginning, man was made in God's image. In the incarnation, God was made in man's image.

This man, this man, little did they realize the depth of what they were talking about when they said, this man receives sinners. The Scottish theologian, John Murray, born across the water from us here in Gerlach.

He was a man who was greatly, greatly, greatly taken with the incarnation. Reflected on it. Set his mind on it. And this is what he came out with.

The incarnation means that God, who never began to be God, began to be what eternally he was not.

[7 : 15] The incarnation means that God, God never had a beginning, but the Lord Jesus Christ has a beginning. Why? To enable sinners to be received.

To enable sinners to be received. Sinners. That's all it says. This man receives sinners. Your qualification is a sinner.

All. It doesn't, there is no distinction. It's all sinners. It's rich sinners. It's poor sinners. It's drunks. It's murderers. It's adulterers. It's a dying thief beside him.

On the cross. Every one of them. And they're all received. And that's the message of Luke 15.

It's that picture of sinners being received. And in answer to that, opposition of the Pharisees, Christ responded, showing to the Pharisees how he received sinners.

[8 : 19] And from that, we have the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and of course, the lost son. And then, we move into chapter 16. And now we come to this section here.

And again, Christ is responding to the criticism of the Pharisees. The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. Nothing new. It's that ongoing opposition.

The hatred, the jealousy is there. It's boiling. It spews out. Wherever it gets its opportunity, it's straight in there. Wherever there's great teaching, there's great opposition. Much for us to think about there, by the way.

But the message changes. Because in Luke 15, it's sinners received. That's the message. That's the message he's responding to. But now he goes a step further.

Because here, it is sinners received. But most solemnly, it is also sinners rejected. Because this passage that we're looking at here has sinners received and sinners rejected.

[9 : 31] As we come to look at this, I'm just wanting to pick up a few points at the beginning. And the first is this. We're not told who the rich man in this story was.

But we are told who the beggar was. The poor man. The poor man is named Lazarus. And for that, some of the Bible expositors believe that this is a factual story.

There has been a great debate as to whether this is a factual story or not. For myself, I believe it is. I have no doubt whatsoever. And it is the only person who is named in any of Christ's parables.

We don't know who the blind man who was healed at Bethesda was. We don't know him. We don't know the name of the prodigal son. We don't know the name of the woman of Samaria. And there are so many places in the parables.

People are brought before us but we're not told their names. But here, we are given a name. Lazarus. Lazarus means God is my helper.

[10 : 43] The rich man isn't named but Lazarus is. And there's a great deal of comfort for us in that as we'll go on. And as Christ begins to teach this lesson, he's doing so to correct a way of thinking that was deeply established in the minds of the Jews and the people of that day.

And that quite simply was that in their understanding, prosperity was the mark of a good man. prosperity meant that somebody was a favorite with heaven.

And of course, the opposite of that was that poverty and beggars and poor were because they had sinned and they were being judged by God. And you even find that coming across in the disciples, don't you?

where they at one time came to Christ and said, who sinned, this man or his father and his mother that he was born blind? It's that same sort of thinking that's lodged in their minds.

And so this was deeply embedded in the mind of the people of the day. But of course, more than that, it was deeply embedded in the Pharisees themselves. They believed that they were greatly favored of God because they were rich and they believed that their riches was an evidence of them being favored by God and giving them that prosperity.

[12 : 16] And so, Christ sets this parable out here before us, tells us this incident here, the rich man and Lazarus, the poor man.

And the contrast couldn't be greater as it's brought out before us here. And that contrast at one time could be seen in our own island.

There was a time when there were very, very, very rich people living in this island. If you think of the time of Leverhulme building the Lewis Castle at a time when many, many, many homes in our own island as they said, as said of it, and as your own minister often quotes, the cupboards were bare but the church was full.

People who had to go and pray for their food. And it can be to this very day that some people are greatly afflicted with poverty and some of the Lord's people greatly afflicted with poverty while the wicked prosper.

Here, we have brought before us a child of condemnation faring sumptuously doesn't need anything has it all faring sumptuously and an heir of heaven lying at his gate perishing for hunger.

[13 : 49] It's such a heart-rending story to read. I'm sure we all in our own way have an image of that rich, rich, rich palace where the rich man dwelt and this incredibly putiful sight laid at his gate.

Couldn't even get there himself, had to be laid there by friends who carried him. And Luke then tells us that the beggar died and the great, great change that came into the experience of the beggar.

The beggar died and was immediately carried to heaven. There and then, the split second, he took his last breath for whom was fulfilled, what we have and are reminded of in the shorter catechism.

The souls of believers at their death are made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory and their bodies still being united to Christ to rest in the graves till the resurrection.

That is the final reception of the sinner. The rich man man. We are told, however, in this translation, we have the word Hades in the King James.

[15 : 21] It's the word hell and for the purposes of today, that's the word I want to focus on. We are told that in hell and being in torment, he lifted up his eyes.

hell. And I want to think and share with you today some thoughts on hell. It's never an easy subject to talk about.

I remember not long after I came to faith, I went into the bookshop one day to look for a book. I was very keen on reading and still am. and a book title caught my eye.

And the title of the book was in the form of a question. The title of the book was Whatever Happened to Hell? And the man who wrote the book, exposing how the church in many, many places has simply drifted away completely from ever, ever, ever talking about hell.

But we have to remind ourselves hell is a doctrine. It is the doctrine of everlasting punishment. And we have to talk about it. We have to talk about it.

[16 : 41] Sometime not long after I started following, I heard a sermon on this. And the preacher that night preached it by taking the word hell and making an acronym of it, giving a meaning, a word, to each of the component letters.

And I want to do that it's not the same letters as he used. I take the idea, I'm not taking the letters, and I have no recollection of the sermon. I want to think of hell under these four headings.

A hopeless place, an everlasting place, a lost place, and a location. Hopeless, everlasting, lost location.

first of all, to think of hell as a place that is hopeless. We can experience hopelessness here, but there have been times where even the most hopeless situation has resolved itself.

I don't know if any of you have ever seen a documentary called The Last Breath, but The Last Breath, I think, is one of the most profound examples I have ever seen of where a situation that was truly, truly hopeless, beyond imagination, resolved itself.

[18 : 09] The Last Breath is about an incident that took place ten years ago. It will be ten years next month since this happened. September 2012, there was a team of divers working in the North Sea, saturation divers, very, very dangerous diving, and they were working on a particularly wild, wild stormy night.

They were about 100 meters down working on the sea floor of the North Sea where a template had been put in place. They were working inside the template doing some pipework repair.

up above them, their ship was battling to maintain position. The weather was so bad. Gusting about force 9, force 10, and that ship had on board what they call a dynamic positioning system, DPS, and that simply used the propellers and the thrusters on the ship to maintain the position perfectly over where the divers were working.

They were working below them on a diving bell. From the diving bell, their umbilical cords connected to them, and they were working on the floor of the North Sea. At one point, the computer which worked the DPS completely crashed.

The DPS stopped working and the ship began to drift, dragging with it the diving bell and the umbilical cords and the divers on the bottom of it.

[19 : 37] they got a message through their helmets to get out from inside the template and to come out. And as they did, one of the divers, his umbilical cord took a bite round a pipe and as he was being dragged away, he couldn't free it.

And as the ship dragged away, his other friend came to try, they couldn't free it, and as the ship dragged away, it simply snapped. contact, he lost everything. He lost his air, he lost contact, everything.

He carried a cylinder of air on his back, which would give him about five or six minutes of air, and he fell to the seabed. He got up, and he knew he had only one hope, and that would be to try and find the template.

Now, at this point in the documentary, it is simply astonishing to hear him what he did. He began walking across the floor of the North Sea. He didn't know where he was going. He had no idea.

Is it in that direction? Is it there? Is it behind me? He just started walking. Incredibly, he bumped right into it. He knew then his only hope would be to swim up onto the top of it, and so he did, and he lay there.

[20 : 50] And he had between five or six minutes of air, and after about five minutes, he became unconscious. the ship drifted for 20 minutes before they managed to restore power, before they managed to get right back over where he was.

They sent down an ROV and a diver. They could see from the cameras on the ROV, they could see him lying unconscious on the top of the template. And they went, and the diver picked him up and took him up.

When they took him back into the diving belt and he broke surface, they gave him the kiss of life, and to their utter astonishment, he breathed. To this day, nobody in the scientific world, in the medical world, is able to explain how the diver lived.

They had given up all hope on the ship. They knew the very second they had lost the DPS. They knew that over half an hour had passed, and this diver was on the seabed.

And they had no hope whatsoever of recovering him. And yet, I'm telling you that long story I'm conscious of, because that is a situation where hopelessness showed that even in the midst of the most profound hopelessness, there is the possibility for hope to come in.

[22 : 16] but to come back to the edge of hell. This is a hopeless place where hope is gone. There is no hope here.

This is a place of no hope whatsoever. And then, it is an everlasting place.

And that is the word that Christ used for it. Remember how time and time again Christ spoke about those who would not be received, but be rejected.

These will go away into everlasting punishment. Something that will have a beginning in the experience of the lost, but no end.

everlasting, beyond time, everlasting. In the book that I spoke about, whatever happened to hell, the man who wrote the book spoke about how the word is so often misused and completely misunderstood, and people think that we can experience hell on earth.

[23 : 39] death. But you see, he then gave examples of how in the Afghanistan war, there was a day when the warfare was so, so intense, there was so much bombing and fire and flames and everything that one commentator said it was like hell on earth.

But you see, the man in the book made this point. That can't be, that is not hell on earth, because that had an ending. That ended.

That didn't go on forever. But this does. This is everlasting. This has no end.

It's a hopeless place. It's an everlasting place. It's a lost place. In chapter 15, had we carried on reading, we would have read the parable of the lost coin, found.

The lost sheep, found. The lost son, found. They're all lost, but they're all found. But there is no finding for the lost here.

[25 : 00] the lost here have passed that place where they can be found. We read here about this great chasm in the avi.

It's called this great gulf that Abraham said to the rich man. When the rich man called out into heaven, prayed, something he had never done in his life, he prayed.

And Abraham said to him, rich man, there's a great gulf between us and you. You can't come from there to us. We can't go from there to you. That great gulf is right here today.

But there's one difference. You can pass today. You can come from being lost. You can come to Christ.

This man receives sinners. That's the message. That's the good news of the gospel. by sin and being sinners, we are lost.

[26 : 03] The gospel message today is you can come. Why are you going to stay lost? And there, in this hopeless, everlasting, lost place, the lost will learn something dreadful that began going back to Genesis in the Garden of Eden.

It's how sin came in. How did sin come in? Through deception. The devil said to Eve, you will not surely die.

She was deceived by that. She believed that. You will not surely die. You eat the fruit of the tree of life. You won't die. Today, there are vast multitudes all over the world who are swallowing that lie.

They simply do not believe in the doctrine of eternal punishment. Some don't even believe they're sinners. a number of years ago, I met a girl in Stornoway one day.

It was the time of the Hebridean Celtic festival, and there was a street outreach, and tracts were being handed out, and it was good news for sinners.

[27 : 32] And this girl came to me with a tract, and she held it up to me, and she said, what an audacity these people have to give me that and say, I am a sinner. What an audacity.

I couldn't believe it. I was really, really taken aback. A lovely girl, a girl I know well. But she just could not see that she was a sinner. But you see the deception that will be manifested to the mind of those who are lost is that they have been deceived.

Now lost in a hopeless everlasting lost location. Because it is a location.

It is a place. There is a place called hell. And don't take that on my authority. And don't take that on the authority of Reverend Myrtle Campbell.

But take it on the authority of the Word of God. Go to the earthly ministry of Christ and look at it. And if you want an exercise go and look how many times did Christ talk about heaven and how many times did he talk about hell?

- [28 : 49] Because Christ spoke more about hell than he did about heaven. And as we'll see with an insight that is not afforded to us but he knows exactly what hell is and he knows that and that is why in his earthly ministry there is so much emphasis on hell.

Time and time and time and time again Christ spoke about the place of the world where the world dieth not. The place of the lost.

The hopeless place. The everlasting place. the lost place. A location. And we ought never ever ever to forget it. The lostness of it comes out so strongly here when we hear as recorded for us the prayer of the lost.

What a tragedy that is. The prayer of the lost. The rich man doing what he had never done on earth. all his riches.

Everything that he could ever have wanted and now he's reduced to wanting a drop of water. As one expositor says, had he prayed earnestly on earth, God would have given him rivers of living water.

- [30 : 23] Rivers of living water. water. What a tragedy. What an awful picture that is of a man who had everything but God and the other man who had nothing but God and how as they both entered the eternal realm, the great separation took place.

One into everlasting joy and one into everlasting torment. It's worthwhile asking this question.

What was the sin of the rich man? Did he end up in everlasting punishment because he was rich? Well, absolutely not.

because if you go to the scripture you will find the name that's mentioned in this narrative, the name Abraham, to be a man who was rich, who God richly blessed and was a man of great riches and here he is in heaven.

And we're not told anywhere in the narrative that the rich man had obtained his riches by improper or immoral ways. We're not told that anywhere.

- [31 : 48] He doesn't say that at all. There's nothing in this passage here to suggest that the rich man is being blamed in any way for his riches.

On this passage, there was a great book written from a series of sermons by a preacher called Brownlow North. Brownlow North preached sermons to an evangelistic meeting in Ulster in 1859 and at that time there was a great, great, great revival.

And if you read Brownlow North's book, he asks the question in that book, what was the rich man's sin? And for the answer to that, he takes us to Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 12.

And in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 12, you will be familiar with how that chapter opens. We looked at the last time I was here. You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.

And then in verse 12, I'll begin at verse 11. Therefore remember that at one time you gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision which is made in the flesh by the hands.

- [33 : 03] This, remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise.

And this is where Brownlow North went for his answer to the rich man's sin. Having no hope and without God in the world. He took these two words. The rich man's sin, I'll tell you what the rich man's sin was.

Without God and Brownlow North put one word in front of it, contented. contented without God.

He had everything. He had it all. So, so many people today are overtaken with their prosperity. I spoke about our island.

I think it can truthfully be said that there was a time when this island was tested with poverty. if it was tested with poverty, I think today we would have been tested with prosperity.

[34 : 15] And I think prosperity has come in and has had a very, very, very profound effect upon us as a people because our prosperity is making us drift away from God because we're content without God.

across our island today, across our nation, across the world, this is the Sabbath day and for many, many people they might as well, it might as well be Thursday, it might as well be Tuesday, it might as well be 12 o'clock on Friday afternoon because Sunday is nothing to them.

They have no thought, they have no desire, they never go to church, they never think of God, they never think of this everlasting punishment and they are all guilty of one sin.

At the end of the day, on the day of judgment, whatever their sins may be, whether they come that day as people who are very, very morally upright, possibly better citizens than some of us in the church, for their morality and for their walk and everything, and yet they will stand guilty of one sin, you were content without God.

Content without God. What is this hopeless, everlasting, lost location?

[35 : 53] It is a place receiving sinners. sinners. We began looking at Luke, Christ receiving sinners.

Here now is a place receiving sinners, not the Lord Jesus Christ, but hell. and that touched Christ so, so deeply in his earthly ministry.

So, so deeply did it touch him. We have that sin brought before us in the gospel writers where we find Christ outside the walls of Jerusalem, just six days before suspended between heaven and earth.

he would purchase the eternal salvation for the sinners who he was going to receive and who would be received. But where do we find him?

At Jerusalem, outside the wall of the city. What's he doing? He's, we are told, weeping over the city, weeping over it. I'm no Greek scholar, but I do have access to places where I can find out what words mean.

[37 : 12] The word weeping that's used there is not where you and I would think of a tear trickling down a cheek here and there. The word weeping there is a person who is uncontrollably crying, almost losing control of themselves.

The weeping, the emotion is so deep, so powerful, it's gushing out, broken, completely broken over the wall of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem. And what does he say? Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem. How often would I have gathered you, but you would not?

Does he say that over us today? Oh, Barvis, Barvis, how often I would have gathered you, but you would not.

I'm going to finish with this. Not long after I was converted, I was in a fellowship one night, and there was a woman in the fellowship, and she told us a story about a very, very well-known preacher, some of the older people here will remember this man, Professor Douglas McMillan.

[38 : 37] And Douglas was a very, very popular preacher, a professor in the college, and in great demand, not only through the island, not only in our own nation, but he had preached on the international stage, he had preached, as you can say, practically all over the world.

A man in great demand. But the woman told the story how, and I've checked this out, and I actually know the congregation, it happened in Garibust, and it happened in the winter time when they had at that time evangelistic services, what we call the Ortean Pica.

And it was in Garibust, on a Sunday evening, and Douglas was in the pulpit, and every single pew was filled. Somewhere in the region of one and a half thousand people present, and Douglas was preaching an evangelistic service.

And he very, very suddenly stopped. He very, very suddenly stopped, and he became emotional in the pulpit. and when he continued, this is what he said.

It has just dawned on me, as I'm standing here in the pulpit tonight, that I can think of no people for whom hell is going to be worse, and for the people of the island of Lewis, because of what you reject.

[39 : 59] and what he was referring to was the witness of the gospel in this island. Every car that we're here in driving past here just now knows what's going on in here.

This is a witness. This is a very, very powerful witness. The Lord's people coming from each of your individual homes today to be here is a very powerful witness.

Your neighbors have seen you. People have seen you. People have passed you on the road. They all know where you're going. Such a powerful witness. The things that are peculiar to our own culture.

The respect we have for the dead. A funeral service. What a sermon there is in that. When you see a long, long, long cortege of people following a coffin.

What a sermon there is in that. And a multitude of other ways that the people of this island have had the gospel presented to them.

[41 : 01] And for Douglas McMillan, a man who had preached all over the world, a man who had preached to multitudes of communities, he singled out the island of Lewes. And that's what he said.

I can think of no people that I've ever stood in front, that I've ever preached to. I can think of no people for whom I lost eternity, for this hopeless, everlasting, lost location is going to be worse than for those who the Lord Jesus Christ desires to gather.

And they say, no. content without God. May the Lord lay upon the heart and spirit of each and every one of us in a way that as it is a joy to be together in the house of God this day, that we might all be together on another day, found, received by the man who receives sinners.

Amen. Let us bow our heads in a word of prayer. Our eternal and sovereign Father, our deliberations this day have been in difficult places.

and we pray for thy nearness and for thy blessing upon thy truth and pray that it will go forth in the power and demonstration of thy spirit.

[42 : 40] We ask, O Lord, for any among us this day who know not yet the Lord Jesus Christ as their saviour. and we come with the prayer of Augustine of old who spoke of that restlessness of spirit that gives a man no rest until he finds his rest in thee.

And we pray that it would please thee to undertake that exercise in all this day. We have the opportunity to come from the place of the lost to be reconciled to thee in the place of the redeemed through the finished work of Christ.

And the prayer shall be thine forever in him. Amen. We'll conclude at this time singing from Psalm 33.

Psalm 33. And we're going to sing first of all verses 13 to 16. And then we're going to sing from verse 18 to the end.

So Psalm 33 and verse 13. The Lord from heaven sees and beholds all sons of men full well. He views all from his dwelling place, but in the earth do dwell.

[44 : 08] He forms their hearts alike, and all their doings he observes. Great hosts save not a king, much strength no mighty man preserves. And then verse 18.

Behold on those that do him fear, the Lord doth set his eye, even those who on his mercy do with confidence rely, from death to free their soul, in death life unto them to yield.

Our soul doth wait upon the Lord, he is our help and shield. Sooth in his holy name we trust, our heart shall joyful be. Lord, let thy mercy be on us, as we do hope in thee.

To God's praise. coefficients. Amen. The Lord from ham ■■■ Behold all sons of men Who will He views all from His dwelling place That in the earth to dwell He forms their hearts alike And all their doings He observes Great old safe thought A kid much strength

No mighty man preserves Behold all those That to Him fear The Lord doth set His eye In those who all His mercy Do with confidence rely From death to free Their soul in earth Life unto them to yield Our soul doth wait

[46 : 54] Upon the Lord He is our help and shield Senth in His holy name We trust Our hearts shall joyful be Lord let thy mercy Be on us As we do hope in thee Conclude with a word of prayer As we have concluded our praise at this time Seeing of the hope that is to be found in thee It is our prayer now as we depart That it would please thee to indwell us

As Christ in us the hope of glory And pray that thou would bless what remains of this thy day As we ask to be heard with forgiveness of sin Amen