



+ **YOU**

Fall 2023

Confident in the Face of Hard Questions

**Sermon Title:** Truths About the Reality of Hell

**To be used with Session #6:** Is Hell Real?

**Scripture:** Luke 16:19-31

**Connection with Unit Theme:** To complement the Bible study *Is Hell Real?* this sermon explores the teachings of Jesus concerning the reality of hell. The congregation will not only learn that hell is real, but they will also know the facts about hell. They will ultimately learn that while hell is a place, they do not have to experience it.

**Introduction:** What words would we use to describe our favorite vacation spot? Some words may be scenic, relaxing, joyous, or refreshing. When we hear these words, we can almost begin to picture our vacation spot in our minds and we long to return. If someone was to ask, what words would they use to describe hell, none of the words just used would make the list. Some wrongly believe that hell is going to be a big party where everyone is living with zero rules or limits. This too would be wrong.

Our message today will explore one of the parables of Jesus to see how He described hell. This is not a message to scare us, but we should have a holy fear about eternal punishment. As we learned in our Bible study groups, hell is real and the words of Jesus add clarity to this fact. The good news is that Jesus has provided us a way to avoid hell.

### 1. Hell is a place of torment and agony (Luke 16:19-24)

Some of the men here today may view shopping as a form of torment. The ladies, however, would say watching reruns of last year's college football championship would be absolutely agonizing. As difficult as both experiences may feel, it is still nice to know that both the shopping and the football game will come to an end.

Jesus also used the words torment and agony, but He was not describing a shopping trip or the rerun of a game. Instead, He was describing the reality of hell. The word torment indicates continual mental struggle and anguish. Agony shows us that significant physical pain is being felt. This pain was being caused by an unrelenting flame. Jesus said that the result of these two words was that the man called out for mercy. The phrase called out shows us someone who is yelling as loud and as long as possible. Surmise it to say, hell is not a place we want to experience.

**Lifeway**

## **2. Hell is a fixed and unchanging state (Luke 16:25-26)**

As we continue in this parable, we see a conversation being had in which the man in hell is looking for a way out. The story shows us that a great chasm has been fixed between heaven and hell and one cannot change the place in which he resides. We learn from the words of Jesus that the place of torment and agony is a permanent and unchanging place.

We have all experienced some manner of pain. We may have fallen out of a tree as a child or experienced surgery as an adult. We did not enjoy the pain, but that painful experience was something in our past. Jesus said that hell was a place of torment and agony. He went on to say that once someone is separated from God, this cannot be changed, and this does not end. Finally, one does not get a second chance to eliminate the experience of hell because there is a great chasm between heaven and hell.

## **3. We do not want our loved ones in hell (Luke 16:27-28)**

As the story continues, we see the man in hell begin to beg. It appears that he has reached the conclusion that his situation is unchanging. Therefore, his focus has changed. He is begging on behalf of his loved ones. The word beg is a verb that is written in the present tense, indicating it is a continuous and emphatic action. This indicates that the man in hell is pleading over and over with Abraham to provide warning for his loved ones.

If we are parents and we saw one of our children walking towards a busy street, we would be emphatic about stopping them. I would not simply state, "It would be wise for you not to walk in the street." We would begin to scream and run towards them because we knew they could be severely hurt if they did not stop. This is the type of response the man in hell had towards his loved ones; he did not want them to join him in a place of agony and torment. Do we feel the same way towards our loved ones who do not know Jesus as Lord?

## **4. We do not have to experience hell (Luke 16:30-31)**

As the story comes to an end, we find hope. In telling the story, Jesus indicates that the man's loved ones have Moses and the prophets to guide them. This is a reference to what we call the Old Testament. The man in hell pleads that someone from the dead needs to return as a warning. The man believes that someone rising from the dead would be proof. In our times today, we have Moses, the prophets, and Jesus being raised from the dead. We have all the evidence that is needed to decide to follow Jesus.

Paul told the church at Rome, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom. 10:13). The word Lord means boss. When we acknowledge Jesus as the boss of our lives, then we also acknowledge that we are not. Calling upon Jesus means admitting that we are all sinners and in need of a Savior. Jesus went to the cross on our behalf so that we would not have to suffer the realities of hell and eternal separation from God.

**Conclusion:** The words to the song *I Have Decided to Follow Jesus* were some of the last words of a martyr from the East. He and his family had converted to Christianity and were being killed for their faith in Christ. As he neared death, he uttered that he had decided to follow Jesus and he was not turning back. A pastor named Simon K. Marak later came and added the verses to what we have today.

What will be our decision today? Will we too decide to follow Jesus and call out for Him to save us? If we are followers of Jesus, will we learn from this parable today and provide the warning to our loved ones so that they do not have to experience eternity apart from the loving Father. The invitation is clear. Let's all pray that we would respond in obedience.

#### **Author Bio**

*Tod Tanner has degrees from Texas A&M University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has pastored churches in Texas and Tennessee. He and his family reside in Wartrace, Tennessee, and he serves as the Vice President of the Tennessee Baptist Foundation.*