Good morning Before you take your seat, please greet the person next to you with a “Welcome to Messiah Bible Church.”

As we take our seats, I’d like to share a story about an overconfident naval captain.

One dark, foggy night, a large naval ship was making its way through a thick fog. Visibility was almost zero.

The captain was standing on the bridge when he noticed a light directly ahead.

He immediately ordered his radio communications officer to send the following message:

“Unidentified vessel, this is Captain Williams. You are directly in my path. I am ordering you to alter your course 10 degrees to the south!”

A few seconds later, a reply came back:

“Captain, I suggest you alter your course 10 degrees to the north.”

When the captain heard this, he was furious.

He grabbed the radio and said, “Listen here! I’m a captain in the United States Navy! I command a battleship! I have 30 years of experience at sea! I am ordering you to change your course immediately!”

The reply came back:

“Well, Captain, I’m just the night watchman at this lighthouse. And I can’t move!”

“YOU’RE GOING TO HAVE TO CHANGE YOUR COURSE!”

You see the majority of men and women are absolutely convinced they’re headed in the right direction. They’re confident in their decisions, comfortable with their circumstances, and certain they know where they’re going, but they are heading straight toward destruction.

And that brings us to our passage this morning in Luke chapter 16, where Jesus tells us about two men who lived very different lives and whose eternal destinations were dramatically different.

I have entitled this sermon “Eyes to See.”

Before we start, let us pray.

Dear Father, this morning we draw near to you with confidence to the throne of grace so that we may receive mercy and find grace in time of need. Father this morning we seek Your guidance. Only you Father know all things and only You Father see all things.

Father, guide us this morning. Help me, Father, to proclaim Your Word. Help Your children to hear Your Word and to obey Your Word. Help us, Father, to be doers of Your Word and not hearers only.

And Father, I pray for those who do not know You this morning, please give them eyes to see and ears to hear, draw them unto Yourself, and save them.

Father, receive all the praise and all the glory, both now and forever. Amen.

A few things we need to know this morning, the passage that we are studying is debated among theologians.

One group believes this is a parable, a story with two fictional characters that Jesus used to illustrate a point. The other group believes this story to be historical fact.

I believe this story to be historical fact. These two men whom we will meet today, lived and knew each other. They interacted with each other in some way or fashion and eventually both men died.

So my question is not did these men live, my question is which one will you meet in eternity?

Next, whenever you are studying Scripture, there is a principle that must be followed.

That principle is “Context is key”.

And in terms of context, when you study the bible you should always ask yourself these questions:

Who is the author? Who is the audience? What is the historical setting? What happened immediately before this passage? And what happens immediately after it?

Following these principles will help us stay focused. It’s easy to speculate and become consumed with obscure details and speculative interpretations. In doing so, we miss the central message of Scripture. The main things are the plain things and the plain things are the main things as my old pastor Bruce Blakey would say again and again.

So what is the context of our passage this morning?

This passage takes place in the gospel of Luke in the 16th chapter and Jesus is speaking to a mixed audience.

We read this in Luke 15:1–2.

- ***“Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them.’”***

In one camp, you have tax collectors and sinners.

Tax collectors were those who collected taxes and tolls on behalf of Rome and local authorities. They were despised in their day for being traitors, dishonest, and greedy.

The “sinners” in this context is not referring to your everyday Jew who sinned. Rather, this group included prostitutes and people engaged in dishonest occupations and whose lifestyles placed them outside the accepted religious community.

In the other camp, you had the Pharisees and the scribes.

The Pharisees were a prominent political religious movement during the time of Christ. Jesus repeatedly confronted them for their love of money, their hypocrisy, their self-righteousness, and their tendency to elevate human traditions over God’s law.

The scribes were men trained as experts in the Law and the Prophets, our Old Testament. They were biblical experts in copying the Scriptures, studying and interpreting Scripture, teaching Scripture, and providing guidance on both religious and legal matters. Jesus also confronted scribes for their hypocrisy, spiritual pride, legalism, and abuse of authority.

Verse 2 tells us:

- “***And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them***.’”

Both the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling, or complaining. And why were they complaining?

Because Jesus was receiving and eating with sinners.

But isn’t that why Jesus came? To seek and save that which was lost.

The problem for the Pharisees and scribes was that they didn’t know they were lost.

So, for the rest of Luke chapter 15, Jesus uses parables to show all those with ears to hear why He came. He does this in the form of parables: the parable of the lost sheep, the parable of the lost coin, and the parable of the prodigal son.

Then, in Luke chapter 16, Jesus changes the focus of the parables to address those with earthly riches, those in authority and to proclaim the supremacy of the word of God.

We read this in Luke 16:14–15.

- “***The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. 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.’”***

Jesus knew them better than they knew themselves and He knew their hearts.

They viewed their authority and their wealth as justification before men, and they judged those less fortunate as people who were being punished by God.

They hid behind their wealth and authority in their attempt to fool the outside world, but they could not fool Jesus.

When it says in verse 15, "…***but God knows your hearts***," Jesus is saying that God knew their souls. He knew their desires, their passions, their thoughts, their reasoning, and their purposes.

He knows everything.

- "***And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.***" — Hebrews 4:13

This is the context for our passage in Luke 16:19–31, often referred to as the rich man and Lazarus.

Jesus, the master storyteller, is going to tell the Pharisees and scribes how wrong they are when it comes to earthly riches, earthly authority and the sufficiency of God's word. Jesus also gives them a glimpse of what lies ahead for them in eternity.

I liken this story to a play with three acts.

Act One The Introduction: Luke 16:19–21

- ***"There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores."***

The first person we encounter is the rich man in verse 19.

The rich man, whose name is not given, is described as being very wealthy. He flaunts his wealth for everyone to see and he uses his wealth to satisfy his desires, what he wants.

The phrase "rich man" means that this man was wealthy and he was abounding in material resources.

Jesus goes into detail as He describes the rich man's material wealth and resources.

He’s clothed in purple. Purple dye came from marine snails found in the Mediterranean Sea. It was very costly, and only those associated with royalty, wealth, and power wore purple.

The rich man’s purple garments were a demonstration of his wealth to the outside world and for the scribes and Pharisees, his wealth was evidence that he was favored by God.

Not only does he have expensive outer garments, but he also has expensive inner garments made of fine linen.

This linen was made from byssus, an Egyptian flax. It was delicate, soft, and very costly.

Have you ever seen a peacock strut around with its feathers spread out for all the world to see?

He was dressed in the finest clothes, and he wanted all the world to see.

And his extravagance didn’t stop at his outward appearance.

In verse 19, we read that he ***“…feasted sumptuously every day.”***

His wealth allowed him to live like a king.

His extravagant lifestyle wasn’t saved for weekends only, it was his daily life, and it was throughout the day. Every day.

And in verse 20, it mentions the rich man’s gate. The Greek word is pylon, which means a large gate, the type of gate you would find in a palace.

The rich man that Jesus is describing has everything the world wants. He had everything the scribes and Pharisees wanted.

Now, our second character: Lazarus.

Lazarus is described as a poor man. Lazarus is a beggar. He is destitute. He has no money, he has no authority. He is helpless, and he is powerless.

The contrast between these two men is absolute.

Lazarus is laid at the gate, and the Greek word for “laid” means to throw or to let go without caring where it falls.

Have you ever watched the trash man throw your garbage into his garbage truck and then he carefully place your garbage can perfectly where it was before?

Of course they don’t do that. They don’t care about your garbage can.

And that’s the same way Lazarus was laid at the gate of the rich man’s palace.

While the rich man is clothed in purple clothes and fine linen, Lazarus is covered with sores. Ulcerated skin is his clothing.

The contrast between the two men continues to grow.

And while the rich man is having his feast daily, Lazarus goes hungry. His desire was to be fed with the scraps that fell from the rich man's table.

Jesus adds this fact: dogs would come and lick his sores. So instead of Lazarus having food to eat, he became a meal for dogs.

Dogs in the time of Christ were not the domesticated pets that live in our homes. These would have been wild dogs that traveled around in packs. To the Jew, dogs were dirty animals, and the fact that dogs would lick his sores made Lazarus's circumstances even worse.

As Act One is closing, know this: Jesus knows the hearts of the scribes and the Pharisees.

And He knows that, to the scribes and Pharisees, the rich man is righteous and Lazarus's condition is justified by either his sin or the sin of his parents.

Material wealth is not proof of God's favor, and poverty is not proof of God's judgment.

Write this down for point number one:

- **1. Riches Do Not Determine Your Standing Before God.**

Act Two The conversation: Luke 16:22–26

Verse 22:

- "***The poor man died and was carried by angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried***."

Let me provide some context courtesy of Dr. Arnold Frucchtenbaum

- **"Throughout the history of the Hebrew Bible, both the righteous and the unrighteous went down to Sheol upon death: however, they did not all go to the same place in Shoel. There were two compartments. The Good side was called paradise and Abraham's Bosom…."**
- **"During the Old Testament times, when believers died their bodies were buried in the ground and their souls went to Sheol, or Abraham's Bosom. They could not directly enter God's presence because the atonement available to them with animal blood could only cover, but not remove the sins of the Old Testament saints…"**

- **“The second division in Sheol was reserved for the fallen angels and the souls of the unrighteous..”**

Now that both men have died, their circumstances have changed dramatically.

Jesus said that Lazarus, upon his death, was carried by angels to Abraham’s side.

The rich man did not go to Abraham’s bosom. We read this in verse 23:

- “***And in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side***.”

After death, the rich man goes to Hades.

Notice it also says, “being in torment.”

There are those who believe that after you die, that’s it, that your soul no longer exists.

Jesus gives us eyes to see that when an unsaved person dies, death is a transition. Earth is no longer their home and their new home is a much different place.

The rich man had everything he desired on earth, now that has changed and hades is his new reality.

Verse 25:

- “***And 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.’”***

The rich man is in torment, and he can see Abraham and Lazarus.

His mind is working. He knows who Abraham is, and he remembers Lazarus.

And what does he ask for?

Mercy.

“Have mercy on me.”

He is asking for help. He is being afflicted and experiencing torment.

Then the rich man issues a command:

- ***“Send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue.”***

The rich man had everything he wanted while he lived on earth—wealth and authority. That position of authority allowed him to control and command others. His servants would heed his commands, they would wait for his beck and call. When he wanted something done, it would be done. I'm confident the rich man had many servants and he was accustomed to getting whatever he wanted.

Now that his eternal home has changed, has his heart changed? No it has not, he doesn't request Lazarus's help. He commands it.

Abraham replies to the rich man in verses 25–26:

- "***But 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. And 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.'"***

Abraham reminds the rich man that while on earth he received good things, while Lazarus received bad things.

For eternity, their roles are reversed. Now Lazarus is the one who is being comforted while the rich man is in anguish.

The Greek word for anguish means torment or to distress oneself.

Abraham also tells the rich man that there is a great chasm, or gap, and that gap is fixed, or firmly set.

So firmly set that it cannot be crossed by either side.

Those in Abraham's bosom cannot go to Hades, and those in Hades cannot go to Abraham's bosom.

Please do not be fooled. There is no second chance in life. There is no reincarnation and what you do in this life impacts the next. The rich man is understanding the reality of his new life in eternity. For the Pharisees and Scribes, Jesus is telling them do not be mistaken, earthly authority is just that, it's earthly and it will not follow you into eternity.

Write this down for point number two:

- ***2. Earthly Authority Does Not Determine Your Standing Before God.***

Act Three The Ultimate Authority: Luke 16:27–31

- “***And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house— for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”***

The rich man has another command for Abraham.

After his first command, which was to have Lazarus comfort him, was denied, his next command is to send Lazarus to his father’s house.

Because he has five brothers who need to be warned.

He wants Lazarus to testify to his five brothers about what awaits them after death.

The rich man knows his brothers, and his request tells us that his brothers are living the same life that he did and his reason for sending Lazarus, ***“lest they also come into this place of torment.”***

Again, the rich man describes his situation as a place of torment.

Jesus called it a place of torment. Abraham called it a place of anguish. The rich man describes it as a place of anguish and torment.

One description of this suffering is agony that is imposed from within a person.

Please understand that the concepts of soul sleep, purgatory, and annihilationism are false and are contrary to what Jesus teaches us here.

Hades is not only real and terrible, but it is final.

The idea that “You’re going to have a party with all my friends in hell” that is a marketing tagline straight from the mouth of the deceiver himself.

The suffering, the anguish, and the torment are not merely physiological distress. The words used to describe Hades communicate profound personal suffering. They convey intense anguish, pain, and suffering.

The rich man is conscious of his surroundings. He can see, and he recognizes Abraham and Lazarus, all the while experiencing this torment.

Part of his torment is understanding the separation that exists between those who are being tormented and those who are being comforted.

This second command is also denied.

Verse 29:

- ***"But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'"***

Abraham tells the rich man that his five brothers have the Old Testament.

Abraham is saying that the Old Testament is sufficient to warn them and bring them to repentance and faith.

Not convinced that God's Word is sufficient, the rich man appeals to Abraham in verse 30:

- ***"And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'"***

He argues with Abraham. He says, ***"No, father Abraham."*** for the rich man the testimony of man is the only thing that will save his brothers. What he is telling Abrahm is, the testimony of man is more powerful than God's Word.

This statement struck its target: the listening Pharisees and scribes.

But what does the Scripture say?

- ***"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." — Hebrews 4:12***

And what did Moses & the prophets say about the poor?

- ***"If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be." — Deuteronomy 15:7–8***
- ***"Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered." — Proverbs 21:13***

- ***"Whoever gives to the poor will not want, but he who hides his eyes will get many a curse." — Proverbs 28:27***

The Pharisees and scribes would have known those verses by memory.

Listen to Abraham's reply in verse 31:

- ***"He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"***

Abraham shuts the door on the conversation and shares a fact with the rich man.

If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.

Faith in God is not based on what is seen nor by the words of man.

Think of all the miracles performed in the Old Testament: the parting of the Red Sea, the walls of Jericho, and fire coming down from heaven and consuming the false prophets of Baal.

These miracles that were seen saved no one. Only faith in God saves.

- ***"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." — Hebrews 11:1***

Write this down for point number three:

- **3. <u>God's Word</u> Is Sufficient to Warn Us and Call Us to <u>Repentance</u>.**

We have been given God's Word and we have been warned.

Today is the time to hear, believe, and respond.

Some more context for this passage.

In the chronology of Jesus and His ministry, this conversation took place in the latter part of His ministry, as He worked His way toward Jerusalem.

The Pharisees and scribes Jesus was talking to were given a glimpse of what the future held for them. They were given eyes to see.

Did the story of the rich man and Lazarus change the Pharisees and scribes?

Sadly, it did not.

The Pharisees and scribes believed that their material wealth and position of authority were proof that they were right before God. They believed that the poor and helpless were in that condition

because of God's judgment, and they believed that the traditions of men was superior to the Word of God.

And they were wrong.

Do we today have that same belief?

That if God is for us, then we will have wealth and health?

Do we see material blessings as proof that we are right before God?

There are eight billion people on earth, and almost half—3.7 billion—live on less than nine dollars a day.

If you have a place to sleep, a car to drive, food in your pantry, and money in the bank, compared to all the people who have ever lived on this planet, from creation until today, you are wealthy.

Please hear me: It's not wrong to have wealth or to have a house, a car, and money in the bank. All of those things are good.

Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 6:19–21

- ***"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."***

The Pharisees and scribes Jesus was talking to were doing the opposite of what these verses teach.

They stored up treasure for themselves and then justified themselves before God with those treasures.

When I read these verses, I think about a movie, Schindler's List.

In the very last scene, the main character finally realizes the true meaning of being wealthy, and he looks at his possessions differently and he keeps repeating the same line "I could've saved one more. I could've saved one more." but it was too late. What was once considered valuable had become insignificant compared to saving a life.

If God has blessed you, use it to advance His kingdom.

When I started this sermon, I said:

I believe this story to be historical fact. These two men whom we met today, lived and knew each other. They interacted with each other in some way or fashion and eventually both men died.

So my question is not did these men live, my question is which one will you meet in eternity?

The question “Which man will you meet in eternity?” is a reference to where you stand before God.

There will be approximately 360 people here today at both services.

Some are members of Messiah Bible Church, others are here for the first time.

Some have put their faith in Jesus Christ for their salvation, but I am sure there are those who have not.

You may be here today because you were invited. Maybe your spouse wants you to attend. Some may be here because their parents make them come.

I would like to talk to that group right now.

The story of the rich man and Lazarus is very fascinating to me as a believer.

Jesus gives us a glimpse into what happens to us when we die and I read about the angels who carry us home. I’m excited that I will meet Abraham and all the saints from the Old Testament whom I have known since childhood.

But as I was writing this sermon, I had to stop at one point. It was during the conversation between Abraham and the rich man. When the rich man understands that Hades is his eternal home, it breaks your heart.

And as I studied the description of Hades, it hurt my heart.

Jesus gives us eyes to see.

Every person will eventually die, and when you do, you will either spend eternity with God or eternity apart from Him.

And here’s the point I want everyone to understand this morning:

It doesn’t matter how confident you are in the direction you’re traveling, if you are headed in the wrong direction. You can ignore the warning, reject the truth, and argue with the messenger, but that doesn’t change the reality of what’s ahead.

Listen to what Jesus says in John 14:6:

- ***Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”***

If you cannot with confidence say in your heart that Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life, if Jesus is not your LORD and Savior, then you will not spend eternity with Him. Instead, you will spend eternity in a place that was created for the fallen angels and that will be your home for eternity.

Today, if you have not ask Christ to forgive you sins and you not made Him Lord of your life, do so. I beg you please do so, before it is too late.

Please bow your heads as I pray.

Closing Prayer

Dear Father, I pray for those here today who do not know You. I pray that today they would put their faith in Jesus Christ and that You would save them from the wrath to come.

I pray for the believers here today. Help us to be good stewards of the blessings we have, the blessings that You have given. That we may use those blessings to advance Your kingdom.

Father, we know that we are here for such a small amount of time, and none of us knows when our time is up. Help us to use are time wisely, help us to make the most of that time.

And Father give us eyes to see. To see what true and what is false. Father give us Eyes for Eternity.

Amen.

Church receive the benediction

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.