

Short Sighted

Created for Significance series

by Bill Aumack

Did you know that the entire Bible is not true? Uh-oh. Now, before you get the torches and the pitchforks and the tar and the feathers and run me out of town, listen. You remember the story of the prophet Nathan who comes to talk to David and he tells him a story about a rich man who steals the poor man's pet sheep, his only sheep. He loved that sheep, and he kills it and feeds it to his company even though he has plenty of sheep. And David's upset, angry. He says, show me that guy, man. He's going to pay for that. And what does the prophet say? David, you are that man. Now, did David actually steal a sheep? No. He was making a point. That story is not true. It's fiction, right? Rich people get a bad rap being sheep stealers, and they didn't do it. Okay?

Jesus' parables are fiction. They're stories to make a point. And most of the time, we know that and we acknowledge that until we get to the parable we're talking about today. And then some of us think that's a good thing, like to use this as points of doctrine. And you can't do that because it's a fictional story. Okay, I want you to keep that in mind.

We're wrapping up our series on Created for significance. I hope you've had fun in this series. If you have, let Pastor know. He worked hard on this series and our small groups. I hope you've had a good time in it.

Next week is our celebration Sabbath. We're gonna hear from our small groups, and we're gonna have Thanksgiving luncheon together. So I hope you're planning on bringing some yummy food to share with us and stay and have some food. This is my favorite luncheon of the year because the cooks go out on this one. Oh, you eat good on this luncheon. Okay, so plan on joining us for that.

Let's open our Bibles this morning to Luke chapter 16. Luke 16. We've been looking at a series of parables in a row. This is the last one, Luke 16. We're going to start at verse 19. And this might be Jesus's most difficult parable. If it's not the most difficult, it's right up there in the top two or three. It's also the only parable

that has a character that's actually named, has an actual name. Usually it's, you know, it's the rich man, it's the woman, it's the shepherd, it's whatever. One of these characters actually has a name, Lazarus. This is not Lazarus that gets raised from the dead. This is a fictional story. So don't get confused about that either. Alright, everybody there, Luke 16, verse 19. Let's read this together.

There was a rich man dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. And at his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus covered in sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died, and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried in Hades where he was in torment. He looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. So he calls out to him, Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue because I am in agony in this fire. But Abraham replied, son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things while Lazarus received bad things. But now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all of this, between us and you, a great chasm has been set in place so that those who want to go from here to you, you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us."

He answered, Then I beg you, Father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so they will not also come to this place of torment. Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them." "No, Father Abraham," he said, "but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent." He said to them, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convicted, even if someone rises from the dead."

How many of you have heard this parable before? Raise your hand. Most of us, maybe 75, 80 percent. How many of you can remember the last time you heard somebody preach about it? Nobody. Pastor is the only one. We don't talk about this one a lot because it's difficult, but with a little bit of study, it won't be too bad. And it's a pretty simple story, right?

There's a rich man who has all the great things of life, lives in luxury. There's a poor man at his gate who he ignores. The poor man wants to eat scraps off the table that you would throw to the dog. He'd be happy with that. He doesn't even get that. They both die. One goes to heaven. One goes to hell. And the rich man

spends about two minutes in hell. And he's like, hey, send Lazarus down here to give me some relief. Abraham says, no can do, big chasm. He says, we'll send him to warn my brothers. Two minutes in hell. This man has turned into the best evangelist ever. Send him to warn my brothers. No can do. They're not going to listen. If even from somebody from the dead, they've got Moses and the prophets.

Very simple story. What's it mean? What are we supposed to learn from this? And how is this related to being Created for Significance? Now, before we get to there, we need to talk about what this parable is not. I want to take just a couple of minutes. On your notes, you've got a section in italics that says for review. Don't turn your Bible to all those texts. I'm going to have them on the screen for you. We are going to blast through this and try to cover this really quick and really high level. We don't do this topic justice. That's kind of the state of the dead. But I want to be a reminder here. And if you've never heard this before and you have questions, please, please, please come speak to me or Pastor or one of our other leaders, and that will help you out with that.

Alright, so what is this not? This is not a teaching about the afterlife. It's not about heaven and hell. It's not about being able to chat between heaven and hell. It's not a story about rich people go to hell and poor people go to heaven. Because I imagine that there's gonna be poor people in heaven and poor people in hell. And there's gonna be rich people in heaven and rich people in hell. So it's not teaching as that. And how do we know that? Because that would go against the teaching that comes right out of Jesus' own mouth.

In Sabbath school today, I don't know where Brother Mario is, but we were talking about the importance of having all of the scripture. You can't just read one book or one section and say this. You've gotta take it with the whole thing in mind. And when you take it with the whole thing in mind, you come up to a really different view, okay? So just real quick, like I said, we're not doing this justice, we're gonna blast through it, but here we go.

In John 11, Jesus is talking to his disciples. He said, after he said this, he went on to tell them, our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I'm going there to wake him up. His disciples replied, Lord, if he sleeps, he'll get better. Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So he told

them plainly, what? Lazarus is dead. What does Jesus call death? Sleep. Dead know not anything, right? And in fact, that's what Ecclesiastes 9.5 tells us, for the living know they will die, but the dead know what? Nothing, they have no further reward, and even their name is forgotten. Do we remember all the people that have lived on the planet? Nope, their names are forgotten, right? What did Jesus teach about going to heaven? When you die, do you go to heaven? John 3, he says, no one has ever gone to heaven except the one who came from heaven, the Son of Man. Now some of you were thinking, wait a minute, there's a couple, there's Enoch, there's Eli, is it jah or sha? It's jah, Elijah. You know how you remember which one came first? They're in alphabetical order. Nice trick, that way you don't get them mixed up. So Elijah comes first. So Elijah goes to heaven, a few others go to heaven, and God's not being here when he's talking about this in this section, he's not going through a history of the entire universe from beginning to end. He's talking to a group of people who think they're going to heaven, and he goes, I'm telling you, nobody goes except those who come from heaven that have come from there. Okay, so don't get hung up on that.

Alright. What did Jesus teach about hell? In Matthew 10, He says, don't be afraid of those who kill the body but can kill the soul, but be afraid of the one who can what? Destroy both the soul and the body in hell. What is hell? A place where things are destroyed. It's destruction. It is not everlasting torment. It's a place of destruction. Okay. That's what Jesus said. These are Jesus's words. They're not my words. Jesus's words. And this is consistent with what it says in Malachi, then you will trample on the wicked and they will be ashes under the sole of your feet on the day when I act says the Lord God Almighty Consistent with Roman 6 for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life And Jesus Christ our Lord the wages of sin is what? death. Eternal torment? No death okay One last one Luke 14 and you will be blessed although they cannot repay you you will be paid at what? the resurrection of the righteous. If You're already in heaven or hell Why do you need to be resurrected? Makes no sense. Okay, when you die you are asleep the dead know nothing. Now that is the shortest description you have ever heard on the state of the dead. and we did not do the topic justice books have been written on its sermons preached on it. But that's an overview of what Jesus has said about heaven and hell okay, and you can use that yo go through stuff with your friends or family members that have questions, okay?

I just want to talk about this parable is not talking about all that stuff. Okay, and how do we know that because it's different from what all that stuff says. So why does Jesus use this example? See the Pharisees believed that when you died you went straight to heaven or hell. And The Pharisees, remember Jesus hasn't died yet. There is no mercy. So how does it decide that whether you go to heaven or hell? By how good you are how well you've followed the law. Did you do everything right? Did you worship the Sabbaths and obey all the Sabbaths? When you sinned, did you go through the whole temple and the purification and stuff? Okay. Very much works oriented. And so they believe this, but it wasn't true. But when Jesus uses this as symbology, it's something that they can relate to.

And we do the same thing. You've heard a joke or you've seen a cartoon where it says, somebody dies and they go to heaven. And what happens? Who do they meet at the pearly gates? Saint Peter. We meet Saint Peter at the pearly gates. Saint Peter's got a book and he's got to check to see whether you get in or not, right? And we talk about this all the time. It's in our jokes. It's in our cartoons. We see this. There's nothing in the Bible that says anything close to that. And when you think about it, it makes no sense, because what happened to all the people who died before St. Peter? How did they get in? Do you know what the current death rate is right now in 2023? It's about 166,000 people a year, which works out to be 116 a minute or almost two a second. Two people every second die in the world. How is poor St. Peter supposed to keep up with that? That line is getting longer by the second, right? It's not real. It's fiction. It points out the fact that there is some gatekeeping thing that happens that decides whether you get in or not. It's not physically St. Peter standing at the gates, right?

So Jesus is making a point. Now, what is that point? It's a good question. Let's take a second and look back right before where we started reading Luke 16. Let's go to verses 14 and 15. Now, remember, in the parable before this, the pastor talked about last week was the shrewd manager, and Jesus is kind of talking to the disciples. And as he was talking to the disciples and he gets to the end of that, and he's talking about that shrewd manager, we come into this, verse 14 and 15.

The Pharisees who loved money heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, Jesus said to them, you are the ones who justify yourself in the eyes of others. But God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in

God's sight. What's detestable in God's sight? What's it say? What's detestable? It's the things people value highly. What are some of the things we value highly? Money, our house, our car, our power, our phones. They're expensive. Okay, we value these things, and God says these things are detestable to me.

Jesus was dealing with people who were fixated on the accumulation of wealth and who hypocritically put on a false front before people and internally their hearts were unrighteous. Simply put, these people pretended to be righteous, but in reality, they were full of greed and a lack of concern for others. And their righteousness was just a show. What Jesus is trying to teach us is, He uses the parable of Lazarus and a lack of love for others. Probably the longest point we've ever had in the history of this church. I'll give you a minute to process that. But that's what this is about. See, it's dangerous to live a life of greed and lack of love for others. That's what He's trying to warn us about.

See, the finite things of this world are not important. Even those phones and those cars, that house, houses are expensive too. Right? That stuff is not important. Linda and I always talk when you see on the news some natural disaster happens somewhere. There's a flood or a landslide or a fire. People lose everything. And you feel bad for them, right? I mean, it hurts. That's tough. And there are some people that are just distraught because they've lost all this stuff. And there's other people that just say, hey, we all made it out okay. This was just stuff. And I hope that if that ever happened to me, I could say that was just stuff. Yeah, I like some of that stuff. I worked hard to gather some of that stuff. But that is just stuff.

See, the context of this parable is not about death or what happens after death. It's about the dangers of greed and hypocrisy. The rich man who completely ignores Lazarus. And why do we know that Lazarus goes to heaven? And why does Lazarus have a name when nobody else gets a name? Does anybody know what the name Lazarus means? It means God with us. And your first thought is, oh, that's like Emmanuel, means God with us. No, that's not the kind of God with us it means. So when we talk about Emmanuel God with us, that's God with us, right? This is God is with us, right? It's kind of looking at it from the opposite ways. One way, Emmanuel is, God is with us. From this way, it's like God is with me. Okay? It's kind of like saying, God will provide for me. God is with me. And so we know that

Lazarus goes to heaven, not because he's poor, but because he trusted God. And his name was God will be with me. Right? And he goes to heaven because of that.

And the rich man begs for Lazarus to comfort him, but it's too late. There's nothing he can do. And the spiritual lesson that comes with this is profound. Get your priorities correct now. Get your priorities correct now, instead of being greedy and hypocritical and prioritized loving God and serving others. Now! Don't put it off. Now, I know some of you young folks are like, 'I got time. Only 25.' I remember being 25. It's great. Indestructible. And I thought I was Superman at 25. Bullets will bounce off. It's fine. Now, I'm slightly older, just a few years. Stop laughing. Bullets don't bounce off anymore. They hurt quite a bit now. Right? Not everybody is guaranteed a long life. You don't know when your day is coming. Get your priorities correct now.

See, because what matters most is how we care for each other. That's what matters. The only thing on this whole planet that you can take to heaven is... Somebody else. Can't take your phone, can't take your car, can't take your guitars. That one hurts a little bit. You can't take that stuff. God's going to give me a better guitar. And I'll be able to play it better too.

See, you guys have heard me say this before. It's God's job to judge. It's Jesus' job to save. It's the Holy Spirit's job to convict. I don't have to do those things. It's my job to love. It's my job to care for people. It's my job to say to my coworker, 'I care whether you go to heaven or not.' It's time to talk to my favorite uncle. 'I care whether you go to heaven or not.' That's how you show you care. That's how you show you care.

Now real quick, I want to do a quick summary on these five weeks we've talked about. These five parables are right in a row in Luke. The important thing that we know about Luke is, Luke is written in chronological order. These parables happen pretty much in chronological order. When you read them, you could read them and think they all happened on the same day. There's nothing to indicate whether they happened right in a row on the same day when Jesus was talking, or whether there's some time between any of them. We don't know. But you could read them and they could come across like they were all told on the same day.

But regardless of whether they all happened on the same day or not, they were all told in short and close proximity to each other. Jesus is trying to teach us

something by telling us these parables. He's not just shotgunning. 'Let's teach him that. Let's teach him that. Let's teach him this. Let's teach him.... right.' He's got a plan that he's coming through here. Let's see if we can figure it out.

Week one, remember week one? We talked about how Jesus healed somebody on the Sabbath day. The Pharisees are like, 'Oh, you can't do that.' He says, 'You pull an ox out of a ditch. Aren't people more important than that? Buzz off.' Okay, Jesus didn't say buzz off, but that was kind of what he meant. And then he talks about the parable of the wedding feast and the king invites everybody to the wedding feast and then they're all too busy to come. And he says, 'Hey, invite other people because my house will be full.' And this is a loud message to Israel who was God's chosen people. And God said, 'You didn't want to come. I'm inviting other people.' And what was important there? That all people are invited to heaven. Even the people that our society deemed as insignificant, the losers, the beggars, the poor people, the dregs of society were important enough to be invited.

Week two, we talk about the lost sheep and the lost coin and how Jesus has a heart for the lost and will chase after the lost and we find significance when we help Jesus chase after the lost. Week three is about the lost son, the prodigal son. And Jesus not only loves the lost son, but he loves the son that's stayed at home too. 'You are my child, everything I have is yours.' We find significance when we accept the lost back into the fold. We welcome them home, we don't judge them and say, 'Hey, you buzzed out of here. I stayed behind.' It doesn't matter.

Number four, last week we talked about the shrewd manager and the significance of using our time and our money and our wealth to make friends for Jesus. I mean, the parable says, 'Use your wealth to make friends for Jesus.' Right? That one's hard to miss. Right? We do those things.

And of course today the rich man and Lazarus and money is not important. It's about caring for others. And we see this theme coming through that the other people on this planet are important. Doesn't matter whether they're rich or poor, they look like us, they don't look like us. Maybe they even vote for that other political party than the one you vote for. Getting ready for presidential season again in the races. Everybody's favorite. Could we be a little kinder and gentler this time? It's okay to disagree. It's okay to think this candidate is better than that

candidate. But let's not hit each other with sticks anymore, amen? See, people matter. All people matter. Doesn't matter where you live. Doesn't matter who your mommy and daddy were. Doesn't matter how much money you've got in the bank. Doesn't matter what color your skin is, what language you speak. Whether you're male, female, or whatever else, God still loves them.

We were talking about the Middle East conflict. I was talking to somebody who was very much pro one side. I said, 'You know, Jesus loves people on the other side too.' Right? Not just these guys. You know, He loves these guys too. And you can look at that either way. It still works. All those people matter.

And so our reflection today is, are you spending your life chasing finite things like money or fame? Because if you are, stop. Yeah, we need a certain amount of money to live. I would like to retire. But need the money, right? But there's a way to work and still have time to do something else, to be involved in God's plan. The challenge, pray for wisdom and opportunities to make a difference in the lives around you. Be intentional. Amen? We so often, we're like, oh God, just let it happen. No, pray to God. Say, God, I care about my favorite uncle. This Thanksgiving, have him asked me a question about religion so that I can get this in. Right? Or my neighbor, they're going through something. Lord, let me get an opportunity to say something. Be intentional. Make a plan. Pray about it and make a difference in the lives around you.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for these amazing lessons you've given us and how they point to the other people in the world that matter, and we find significance, Lord, when we care about them as much as you do. Even the people that are so different from us. Lord, we just ask that you be with us. Help us to have that heart that is looking for ways where we can help somebody. And we can all do that different ways. There's so many thousands of ways that we can do that. Help us to be those kinds of people. Be the kind of people that care and love those around us. Be with us this upcoming week, Lord. And help us to make a difference for you. In Jesus' name, amen.