TEXT: LUKE 16:19-31  
#2793
LAST JUDGMENT

THEME: “HEROES AND HEROINES OF FAITH: THE BEGGAR LAZARUS, A
SOBERING LESSON FOR END TIME” I. GOD’S JUDGMENT IS CERTAIN. II. HIS
JUDGMENT IS FINAL. III. HIS JUDGMENT CALLS FOR PREPARATION.

Phoenix – 11/9/14

My dear fellow redeemed,

In many of the states throughout our country there’s a rather unusual penalty imposed on people who are convicted of flagrant traffic violations. In addition to their court fines or jail terms, those people are required to watch a movie which shows in vivid color and graphic details the aftermath of some horrific car crashes and the mangled and bloodied human bodies those crashes produced. This movie, I’m told, does have a very sobering effect on most of the people who view it. Some people become nauseated by what they see. Others are frightened. Still others are shocked. But most everybody gets the point. “This is what can happen when you drive a car,” the movie is saying to those who watch it. “This is what you can do to other people when you drive a car, and once something like this happens, it’s too late. So take care and drive safely!”

In like manner, there is also a very sobering message connected with the account of still another of the “Heroes and Heroines of Faith” from the Bible – the one whom we meet in these verses which are now before us. His name is Lazarus, and he was a beggar. In connection with his account too there are some very graphic things and some very sobering scenes that are depicted, and now that we have entered the part of the Christian Church Year called “End Time,” I believe that we would all do well to focus on “THE BEGGAR LAZARUS, A SOBERING LESSON FOR END TIME.” First, from the example of this hero of faith we are taught that I. GOD’S JUDGMENT IS CERTAIN. Then II. GOD’S JUDGMENT IS FINAL. And also that III. GOD’S JUDGMENT CALLS FOR PREPARATION.

The first thing we learn from this hero of faith named Lazarus is that GOD’S JUDGMENT IS ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN for each and every one of us. It is going to happen sooner or later. In these verses we meet two men, and they were very different from each other. The one lived in luxury. He had the proverbial “great big mansion on a hill.” He dressed like a king and dined like a gourmet. He had everything money could buy. The other man was a beggar named Lazarus, who lived in abject poverty. He was lying outside the main gate of the millionaire’s mansion, and he was really a pitiful sight to behold. He was sick and hungry. His body was covered from head to toe with festering sores. The only “doctors” who ever attended him were the scavenging dogs, and the only “medical attention” he ever received came from those dogs licking his wounds. The only “doctors” who ever attended him were the scavenging dogs, and the only “medical attention” he ever received came from those dogs licking his wounds. He wasn’t able to work, and somehow he ended up being dumped on the rich man’s doorstep with the hope of being able to eat some of the garbage tossed out into the street by the chefs in the mansion.

But “the time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side,” we are told. “The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side,” v.22&23. Yes, “the time came,” and both the rich man and the beggar died. Death is no respecter of persons. Rich or poor, everyone dies sooner or later, and there’s nothing that can change that – not a healthy diet and plenty of exercise, not modern medicine and Mayo Clinic doctors, not the latest in scientific technology....nothing. The Bible says, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world thru one man and death thru sin, in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.” Death is certain for all people, and so is receiving God’s judgment at the moment of death. Lazarus died and immediately his soul was judged; the rich man died and his soul was also immediately judged. You and I are going to die too someday, and at the very moment of our death our immortal soul will also leave our mortal body to be judged by God.
This is certain, my friends. It definitely is going to happen. Yet, sad to say, there are many people who live as though this was never going to happen. I mean, they live as if they were going to continue living here on earth forever. They just don't seem to give any thought to the possibility of their dying or of them ever being judged by God. Benjamin Franklin once said, “Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today.” But when it comes to death and dying and being judged by God, a lot of people seem to adopt the attitude which says, “Why do today what you can probably do tomorrow?” “What’s the hurry?” they say. “You’ve got plenty of time. You can always attend to that later on.” But can you, my friends? Will you have “plenty of time” to attend to this all-important matter “later on”? Look at all of the people – young and old – who die suddenly and unexpectedly every day! “Now is the time of God’s favor,” the Bible says. “Now is the day of salvation.” God’s judgment is going to be pronounced upon each one of us sooner or later, and perhaps for some of us it will be sooner rather than later. This is going to happen. This is certain. It’s just a matter of timing, that’s all. In view of this, we too should pray as Moses did in our psalm this morning: “Lord, teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

II.

But there’s something else that we also learn from the beggar Lazarus, and that is, GOD’S JUDGMENT IS FINAL. Listen, we are told, “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 hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called 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 this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us,'” v.22-26. This is the way it is – God’s judgment is final.

Lazarus died believing in the Lord, and when he died his soul was taken to heaven. That was his judgment, and his judgment was final. The rich man, on the other hand, died as an unbeliever, and when he died his soul was cast into the lake of fire in hell to suffer torments that will never end and can never be relieved. That was his judgment, and his judgment was also final. This is the way it is for every human being. At the moment of death, our eternal destiny is determined. Our God says in His Word, “A man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.” Nobody will ever be given a second chance after they have died. There is no “court of appeals,” so to speak, when it comes to God’s judgment and His verdict. In hell there is no possibility for repentance and conversion, and in heaven there is no possibility of ever losing God and His eternal treasures. At the moment of our death, God will pass His judgment on each of us, and His judgment definitely will be final.

This, my friends, is the sobering lesson for End Time that we learn from this hero of faith, the beggar named Lazarus. For every unbeliever there is a stern and sobering warning in this. “Hell is for real!” this account is saying in no uncertain terms. “And God’s judgment on those who end up there is final!” Today there are many people, including some prominent theologians, who don’t believe in the existence of an actual place of everlasting torment called “hell.” They scoff at the very idea. But that doesn’t change the facts. Hell is for real! It’s a real place of real suffering in real flames for real people. It’s a place where all those who reject Jesus as their Savior from sin will suffer unending pain and torture with their bodies and their souls. Our Lord Jesus Himself has said, “Whoever does not believe will be condemned” – condemned to this very real hell. This is His warning, given out of love and concern for all unbelievers. He wants them to “seek the Lord while He may be found,” as the Bible says, “and to call on Him while He is near,” that is, to do this now during their lifetime here on earth, so that they might escape His wrath and be saved in His judgment.
But there's also "a flip-side to this coin" as we see in the case of the beggar Lazarus. While he was living here on earth, Lazarus had experienced some "bad things," we are told. But all of that ended for him at the moment of his death. Then he was "comforted." This, my friends, is the promise our Lord Jesus has given to all of us who trust in Him for our eternal salvation. "Heaven is for real too!" He assures us. "Someday you're going to live there with me," He says, "because I have washed away all of your sins with my own precious blood. And once you're here with me," our Savior says, "you'll have no more 'bad things' either. No one will ever be able to take away your joy and happiness because God's judgment for you will be final." That's really a breath of fresh air as we live in this sin-torn world with all of its problems and challenges, isn't it? Sometimes, just like Lazarus, we too may "thru much tribulation have to enter the kingdom of heaven," but once we do finally get there that blessedness will last forever since God's judgment is final. This is our comfort and consolation as we live in the present and our hope and assurance as we look to the future.

Now there's still one more thing that we learn from the account of the beggar Lazarus, and that is, GOD'S JUDGMENT CALLS FOR PREPARATION. The two men we meet here were very different from each other in life, weren't they? And they were also very different from each other in death too. The beggar Lazarus was all set for God's judgment, and the rich man wasn't. The rich man had five brothers who were just like him, and from what Abraham said to him concerning his brothers, we can see exactly how it was that Lazarus was prepared for God's judgment and the rich man wasn't. Listen, we are told, "The rich man answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that 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 him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'" v.27-31.

"Your brothers have Moses and the Prophets," Abraham told the rich man. "They have God's Word, and that's all they need for their salvation. If they listen to what God says in His Word and take those truths to heart, they will be prepared to stand before Him in judgment and they will be saved. But if they won't listen to God in His Word," Abraham said, "then there's nothing that going to help them, and when all is said and done they'll end up in hell just like you." Do you see the secret of properly preparing for God's judgment, my friends? It all has to do with God's Word, and our attitude toward His Word, and what we do with His Word. In connection with this, I am reminded of a Christian missionary in Peru who was going out one evening to visit a small group of believers. He knew that the house where they would be meeting was located high up on a cliff, and that the pathway leading to it was extremely treacherous. From his own house he took a taxi as far as it could go, and from there he began the hazardous ascent to the house on foot. The night was dark and the way was difficult. As he rounded a bend on the path, however, he was met by a number of those Christians and they were all carrying lanterns. They had come out to light the way for him. With his fears relieved by the light of those lanterns, the missionary went up the path without mishap and had a wonderful meeting with his fellow believers.

In like manner, my friends, this is very much the way it is with us and with what God does for us thru His holy Word, the Bible. In the Bible God "lights the way to His home for us," so to speak. He shows us how it is that we are truly prepared to stand before Him and receive His judgment. He makes it very clear that our only hope for salvation, that the only way we will ever be able to stand before Him and be saved, is by trusting in His Son Jesus as our Savior from sin – the One He Himself sent to live and suffer and die to atone for all of our sins so that we might be reconciled to him. Thru the power of His Word, God Himself leads us to believe and trust in Jesus as our Savior, and thru the power of that same Word He
strengthens and preserves us in this saving faith which justifies us in His sight, making us truly prepared to stand before Him in judgment.

Now I would venture to say that you've all heard this before, haven’t you? In fact, I know that you've heard this. I know that you've heard about the importance of hearing God's Word here in church, and the importance of studying God's Word in your homes and in our Bible classes, and the importance of firmly believing everything God says in His Word, especially when so many people these days are saying otherwise. I know that you've heard this, you see, because I have personally stressed this to you numerous times in the past. But I wonder......I wonder if the rich man who wound up in hell also heard the rabbis of his day stress these same things to him? If he did, he certainly didn't listen. Don't make the same mistake, my friends. It doesn't do you any good to have the Word of God if you don't use it in the way and for the purpose for which God has given it to you. Thru His Word God can and will and does prepare you to stand before Him in judgment by leading you to and keeping you with your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I pray that God will give each of you the wisdom to see this, so that by faithfully “listening to Moses and the Prophets” you too will at last join father Abraham, the beggar Lazarus, and our Lord Jesus in the everlasting bliss and glory of heaven.

AMEN