

LUKE

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Luke chapter 15 as we continue our study through the Word of God. In our last study, we saw Jesus enter the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread with this man and his friends. And keep in mind that it was the Sabbath. And there was a man present who had dropsy and Jesus asked these religious leaders if it was Kosher to heal on the Sabbath or really is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?

And they kept silent because they knew the answer but they did not want to deal with the truth. Thus, they watched Jesus heal this man and I am sure they were very angry. And Jesus asks them if you have a donkey that falls into the pit on the Sabbath would you not go and rescue him? Of course they would and they knew the truth, they just refused the truth. And we are told their response in Luke 14:6, “**And they could not answer Him regarding these things.**”

Then Jesus gives them a few parables to drive home His point. One is the Parable of the Great Supper where Jesus invites His guests and they come up with all kinds of excuses why they cannot come. Thus, Jesus tells them to go to the highways and byways and invite all to come to the feast.

From there Jesus spoke of the cost of discipleship and these were not easy words to swallow. And that is where we will pick up our study this evening in Luke chapter 15 as we look at the response to what Jesus said, “**... He who has ears to hear, let him hear!**” Luke 14:35.

LUKE 15**VERSES 1-3**

Who had ears to hear? Who counted the cost of being a disciple of Jesus and was not offended? The tax collectors and sinners! Why? Because they saw themselves as they were, sinners in need of a Savior!

Not only that but they saw the love that Jesus had for them. It was not that He condoned their sin but He extended the forgiveness of sin to them and told them to go and sin no more!

Then there were the Pharisees and the Scribes, the religious leaders and they saw themselves as clean, as righteous, as holy. In fact, they looked down upon the common person and they did not want to contaminate themselves with those kind of people!

Notice what they say of Jesus and what He is doing, “**This man receives [welcomes] sinners and eats with them.**” In that culture, when you broke bread with another you became part of that person in a sense. So these religious leaders saw Jesus becoming one with these sinners not realizing that it was not Jesus who was affected by them but they were affected by Jesus, He transformed their lives!

Now think about this for a minute. Aren't you glad that God receives sinners and not the righteous? Of course you are because those who are righteous are only righteous in themselves. But as sinners, we know we are in trouble and in need of a Savior and Jesus welcomes us in! Praise God for that!

Now Jesus is going to give some parables that deal with the love of God and how God goes looking for those who are lost to bring them in, to rescue them. So let's read on and look at this first one, The Parable of the Lost Sheep.

VERSES 4-7

Remember that that Jesus is speaking regarding the accusation the religious leaders made against him, “**This man receives sinners and eats with them.**”

Thus, the Shepherd is Jesus, the ninety-nine sheep represent the Pharisees and the Scribes who are in the wilderness, and the lost sheep represents a sinner.

And we see Jesus go out looking for us as Luke 19:10 tells us, “**for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.**”

Once He finds us He places us on His shoulders, an intimate relationship, and carries us home as Romans 5:6 tells us, “**For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.**”

And the Lord celebrates as this one sheep comes into the fold, He rejoices over our salvation!

Now many miss this point here but I think it is important. Did you notice that there is no rejoicing over the ninety-nine sheep? Why is that? Because they saw themselves as clean, as righteous, in no need for a Savior.

That is a tough one for many for they see all 100 sheep being saved. But look again at verse 7 where we are told, “**I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.**”

You see, there is no rejoicing for the self-righteous, arrogant, proud person who is going to Hell. And in this case, Jesus was speaking of the Pharisees and the Scribes who refused to repent because they had no need to repent, or so they felt!

Make no mistake about it, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and thus, we need to repent of our sins and ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of our lives. We don't come in our own righteousness, which are like filthy rags, but we come before God the Father in the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed into our lives by faith!

VERSES 8-10

This coin, a drachma, was a Greek silver coin referred to only here in the New Testament and it equaled about a day's wages.

And once again, this time with a lost coin, when it is found, there is rejoicing, there is a celebration. And notice that when a person gets saved, when you were saved, not only was God rejoicing, but so were the angels!

Now some wonder about the other nine coins. Personally, I believe Jesus once again is speaking about the Pharisees and the Scribes who thought they were found, were righteous and thus, never repented and were never saved!

Listen again to what Jesus said in Luke 15:10, "**Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.**" Repentance is important and yet, we don't hear much about it today. The word speaks of doing an about-face you might say. You were moving away from God and when you received Jesus as Lord and Savior you turned around and now are moving towards God.

Now I do want to bring this up because we do hear this even today. The religious leaders of Jesus' day had some interesting thoughts about what brings joy to God and really, the angels of heaven. You see, the religious leaders had a saying that went like this, "***There will be joy in heaven over one sinner who is obliterated before God.***"

But that is not what the Scriptures teach, it is not what Jesus taught. You see, Jesus' view is far different for He says there is joy in heaven when a sinner is saved and not obliterated!

And please understand this, this is not a New Testament concept, for we read in Ezekiel chapter 18, **“Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” says the Lord GOD, ‘and not that he should turn from his ways and live?’ . . . ‘Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,’ says the Lord GOD. ‘Therefore turn and live!’”** Ezekiel 18:23, 31-32.

Thus, the religious leaders were not representing the heart of God in this matter. I wonder if we don't do the same at times when we speak of the evil of this generation? Something to think about! The lost are out there, do we care for them or are we like James and John calling for God to smote them?

VERSES 11-16

Here we have the story of the prodigal son, a story that has played out in many homes throughout the years. In this story the younger of two sons wants his portion of his inheritance from his father now, instead of waiting until after his father's death, which was the common practice.

And we see that the father gave his son the portion that was his and after a few days he takes off for the high life. Think of it as free will, the choices we make in this life. And as this young man went out things were great, he had lots of friends. It was party time, it doesn't get any better than this!

Sin is fun but that fun is limited and the consequences are devastating. You see, this young man had a great time until he wasted all of his money and then he was left alone. Yes, he had more friends than you can imagine when he had the money but once that was gone, so too were his friends.

Not only that, things got even worse for him. There was a famine that came upon the land, not only physical, but spiritual for this young man. And at this point he is starving and the only job he could find was feeding and caring for pigs, not a kosher thing for a Jew. And he was so hungry he was willing to eat what the pigs were eating.

Now as we read this we may feel sorry for this young man. Especially when we read in Luke 15:16 that “**no one gave him anything.**”

How harsh, how cruel. This young man was in need and no one helped him! Let me say this because our response many times would be to help him out, he is in need. But that would have only helped him temporarily and not eternally!

What do I mean by that? I mean that this young man needed to be broken, to come to the end of himself so that he can return home. You see, if someone helped him out at this point, he would have just continued living in this condition.

I am not saying that we should not help people but pray about it and make sure you are not enabling someone to continue in their sin, in their rebellion against God. Maybe God is bringing them to this point so they can repent and return! Something we need to think about and pray about.

VERSES 17-19

When it says, “**But when he came to himself . . .**” it is saying when he came to the end of himself. He is now broken, hopeless, helpless, in a state of despair, and it is then and only then that he recognizes the only place to go would be to his father.

You see, he recognized his sin, he repented and he is going to return. That is an important lesson to follow when we run away from God. We must come to the end of ourselves, repent and return to Him.

Now, here in the twenty-first century we have developed this mentality that all my sin is somebody else’s fault! I’m entitled to have a home, food, cars, the government owes me! It is my father’s fault, he abused me as a child and this is how I turned out! My brother was always mean to me, I could not stay at home! If those pigs just cleaned themselves up this job would not be that bad!

No, this young man did not blame anyone but himself and that lead him to repentance and returning to his father. He is not focused on all that has happened to him but he is focused on his father. How important that is that we are focused upon Father God!

VERSES 20-24

Sometimes we read these stories and we miss all that is going on. We are told, “**... But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him . . .**” Was that just luck on the part of the father to be looking that day? I don’t think so! I think every day the father was out there looking for the son to return home.

And as they meet we see the son repent before his father and what does the father do? “I told you so. How could you be so foolish!” No, he didn’t say that. What about, “Why didn’t you listen to me in the first place?” No, he doesn’t say that either.

What we see him do is run to his son, hug him, kiss him and calls for the servants to bring out the best robe and place it upon his son. Put a ring on his hand, sandals on his feet and kill the fatted calf and let’s eat, let’s celebrate! He was not going to be a slave but a **SON!**

Is that not our Heavenly Father! And let me also say this. This young man should have been put to death for dishonoring his father and his lifestyle. You see, the penalty for the way he treated his father was stoning! Thus, as he wrapped his arms around his son, he was saying to those around him, if you want to stone my son, you have to go through me first! That is love and that is forgiveness!

That is how much God loves us! If there are any here this evening who have been running from God, understand that God is waiting, He is watching for you to return to Him and when you come to the end of yourself, repent and return to Him, come to that saving faith by asking Jesus to be Lord and Savior of your life! And as the Lord wraps His arms around you no one can get to you and if they try, they will have to go through the Lord!

What a wonderful occasion we see here. A true celebration is taking place. Why all this joy? **“For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.”** Luke 15:24.

But not everyone is happy. Let’s read on and you will see what I mean.

VERSES 25-32

Not many focus on the older son, but he is a part of this story. Some feel that this older son was saved but had bitterness in his heart over the blessings his brother received when he returned home. It is possible but I don't see it that way.

The reason I feel that this older son is not saved is who Jesus is speaking against. He is speaking against the words, the teachings of the Scribes and Pharisees, "**This man receives sinners and eats with them.**" Luke 15:2.

In saying that, I feel that this older son represented these religious leaders. Think about this. Jesus came to free man from his sin, to bring them joy, but the religious leaders couldn't handle that especially when this gift was extended to the Gentiles.

Thus, the older son refused to enter in even after the father pleaded with him to come. But he still refused. The response of this older son is interesting because it parallels what these religious leaders believed.

Notice the response of this older son. He tells his father that he has faithfully served him many years, that he kept the commands of his father and yet did not receive any blessing.

Interesting isn't it! First of all, they did not faithfully serve God but were rebellious towards Him. They did not keep the commandments of God but used them to justify their behavior and their worthiness to go to heaven!

And this son, as were the religious leaders, were mad because all the younger son did was come to the end of himself, repent and return and he was accepted. And the reality is, that is all anyone has to do to get in, to enter through the Son, Jesus Christ, repenting of your sins, and you are adopted into the family of God. And yes, people still get upset with that today, religious people who feel you must work your way into heaven, and they are still wrong with that kind of theology!

And the reality is, the older brother had so much but was not appreciative of all he had. Morris tells us, "Every day he had his father's company, and the blessed society of home. His father's love was round about him constantly, and everything they father had was his." Yet, "The proud and the self-righteous always feel that they are not treated as well as they deserve."
(Morris)

Let me throw this out to you and get you thinking. Now this may shock some of you, but there are two ways to get into heaven. Hear me out before you get too upset! Do you know what they are?

Well, the first way is told to us in Ephesians 2:8-9, which says, "**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.**" It is a gift of God that we receive by faith, believing in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone!

Thus, as Paul says in Galatians 3:29, "**And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**" Who is this free gift for?

Jesus said in John 3:16-18, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”** So it is for all who will receive it!

Now what about the second way to get into heaven. That is a little harder. You see, the second way is to keep the Law, not stumbling at all, from your birth until you die. First of all we are all born in sin, born with a sin nature, so this is impossible.

In fact, there is only one person who has ever accomplished that and that is Jesus Christ! You see, you can't do it, it is impossible, and like I have said, not to mention the inherited sin we have from Adam. But even if you tried, look how hopeless it would be. James tells us, **“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”** James 2:10. Imagine living out your life, you are 99 years old and right before you take your last breath you sin. That is it, you are done, you have stumbled, you are out!

And please understand that your good deeds do not outweigh your bad deeds. It is impossible to stand before God the Father in our own righteousness, which are like filthy rags! Thus, receive the gift of grace that God has extended to us through Jesus Christ by faith, it is the only way you can enter in!

I like the way that Spurgeon sums up this chapter. He wrote, “The truth here taught is just this: that mercy stretches forth her hand to misery, that grace receives men as sinners, that it deals with demerit, unworthiness and worthlessness; that those who think themselves righteous are not the objects of divine compassion, but the unrighteous, the guilty and the undeserving, are the proper subjects for the infinite mercy of God; in a word, that salvation is not of merit but of grace.”

As we continue on Jesus is going to speak to His disciples. Listen to what He said.

LUKE 16

VERSES 1-8

It is possible that this is a different occasion than what we were reading in Luke 15. Now He is speaking to His disciples, those who have committed their lives to Jesus and He is going to give to them this story that seems very difficult to understand, it is the story of the unjust steward. And as we will see, there were also some Pharisees who were listening in. (Luke 16:14)

As you read this you may be confused of the point that Jesus is making. What we see here is that this steward was embezzling money from his boss and he gets caught and fired for his actions. Obviously a very difficult position to be in, losing your job and what is he going to do?

Here is the dilemma that this man is in. He says that he can't dig, maybe too old for that kind of work or he is just too lazy. He refuses to beg, too proud for that. So what does he do?

He decided to be even more dishonest by calling his master's debtor's and cutting their bill in half for some and 20% for others.

Why did he do this? So once he was officially fired, left the business, he would find favor with those he helped by cutting their bills. In other words, he used his present situation to help him in the future even though he still was dishonest!

Now please understand that Jesus is not commending this man for being wicked but He commended him for his shrewdness in preparing for the future!

Now how in the world can Jesus use an example like this, the example of this dishonest man, to exhort His disciples, to show them what they must do? Let's read on and see what we can discern from this story.

VERSE 9

Again, please understand that Jesus is not saying that we are to do as this man did but learn the example and use the same vigor he used to speak forth the Gospel message in our service for God.

First of all, he used his present position to arrange for a comfortable future. What does that mean for us? It means that we are to use our present position in Christ to prepare for a future with Him, laying up our treasures in heaven.

Secondly, he knew he would have to give an account of his life and he took that seriously, and so should we. Are we wasting time or using it for the glory of God? Are we using the riches of this world to build our kingdom or His?

How sad it is when more beer is distributed throughout the world than the Gospel message. I guess, "**The sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.**"

Folks, that should not be and Jesus is commanding us to go forth, plan ahead, use the things of this world to build up His Kingdom with souls who once were lost but now are found!

It is as Maclaren said, “Go to the men of the world, thou Christian, and do not let it be said that the devil’s scholars are more studious and earnest than Christ’s disciples.” Interesting point!

And folk’s, money is not evil but the love of money is because it will make you do all kinds of things to gain more, to maintain what you have. Remember what Paul said in I Timothy 6:10, “**For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**” Thus, don’t be taken captive by money but use money for the furtherance of the Gospel message!

I like how this is brought together for us, what it all means because verse 9 is troubling to some, maybe all of us when we read, “**And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon . . .**” Listen to how this plays out. We are told,

In His application of the story in the remaining verses, Jesus begins by saying, “For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light” (Luke 16:8). Jesus is drawing a contrast between the “sons of the world” (i.e., unbelievers) and the “sons of light” (believers). Unbelievers are wiser in the things of this world than believers are about the things of the world to come. The unjust steward, once he knew he was about to be put out, maneuvered to put others’ debt to himself. He did so by cheating his master (who more than likely was cheating his customers). He made friends of his master’s debtors who would then be obligated to care for him once he lost his job.

What does this have to do with believers being wise about the life to come? Let's look at verse 9: "And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings." Jesus is encouraging His followers to be generous with their wealth in this life so that in the life to come their new friends will receive them "into eternal dwellings." This is similar to Jesus' teaching on wealth in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus exhorts His followers to lay up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21).

The term *unrighteous* (or *worldly*) *wealth* seems to strike readers the wrong way. But Jesus is not saying that believers should gain wealth unrighteously and then be generous with it. "Unrighteous" in reference to wealth can refer to 1) the means in acquiring wealth; 2) the way in which one desires to use the wealth; or 3) the corrupting influence wealth can have that often leads people to commit unrighteous acts. Given the way in which Jesus employs the term, the third explanation seems the most likely. Wealth is not inherently evil, but the love of money can lead to all sorts of sin (1 Timothy 6:10).

So, the principle that Jesus is trying to convey is one of a just steward rather than an unjust one. The unjust steward saw his master's resources as a means for his own personal enjoyment and advancement. Conversely, Jesus wants His followers to be just, righteous stewards. If we understand the principle that everything we own is a gift from God, then we realize that God is the owner of everything and that we are His stewards. As such, we are to use the Master's resources to further the Master's goals. In this specific case, we are to be generous with our wealth and use it for the benefit of others.

- <https://www.gotquestions.org/parable-unjust-steward.html>

I think that sheds some light to what Jesus is telling us. And there is more to this as we read on. Listen to what else Jesus is telling us.

VERSES 10-12

I think this is pretty clear. Jesus is teaching us to be faithful in what He has instructed us, what He has entrusted to us. So often people want more from God and yet they are not faithful in what He has already entrusted to them. Think of it this way, all we have belongs to God, thus, how are you using those things? Again, listen to how this plays out. We are told,

Jesus then goes on to expand in verses 10–13 the principle given in verse 9. If one is faithful in “little” (i.e., “unrighteous” wealth), then one will be faithful in much. Similarly, if one is dishonest in little, he will also be dishonest in much. If we can’t be faithful with earthly wealth, which isn’t even ours to begin with, then how can we be entrusted with “true riches”? The “true riches” here is referring to stewardship and responsibility in God’s kingdom along with all the accompanying heavenly rewards.

- <https://www.gotquestions.org/parable-unjust-steward.html>

Here comes the application in verse 13.

VERSE 13

The focus here is this, “Who are you serving? What has control of your life?” And make no mistake about it, the fruit is obvious.

Back in 1990 a businessman staggered onto the streets of his Los Angeles office after a gunshot wound to his chest. Before he died he called out the names of his three children, still clutching his \$10,000 Rolex watch in his hand. You see, this man was a victim of a rash of Rolex watch robberies and he was killed as a sacrifice to his god - mammon!

Or maybe you heard of Mary, the young professional who explained: "Shopping is my recreation. It's my way of pampering myself. When you walk into [a mall] and you see all the stores, it's like something takes over and you get caught up in it." She, in a sense, is possessed by mammon!

Then there is the 1992 story in the Los Angeles Times that told about Michelle, a successful writer and editor, who fears the day her husband might discover her secret stash of credit cards, her secret post office box or the other tricks she uses to hide how much money she spends shopping for herself. "I make as much money as my husband . . . If I want a \$500 suit from Ann Taylor, I deserve it and don't want to be hassled about it. So the easiest thing to do is lie," she explains. Last year, when her husband forced her to destroy one of her credit cards, Michelle went out and got a new one without telling him. "I do live in fear. If he discovers this new VISA, he'll kill me."

And lastly, and there are millions more, a school teacher explained it this way, "Men just don't understand that shopping is our drug of choice," she joked, even while admitting that some months her salary goes exclusively to paying the minimum balance on her credit cards. "Walking through the door of South Coast Plaza is like walking through the gates of heaven. God made car trunks for women to hide shopping bags in."

I don't think so but who is your god, who are your worshiping because whoever it is will control your life! And please don't come to the conclusion that this is only speaking of those that are rich, who have money, not at all.

This can happen to anyone who allows the things of this world to consume their lives, to control their lives. Remember the great musician/evangelist, and I say that tongue in cheek, Bob Dylan, who sang, "But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes Indeed you're gonna have to serve somebody. Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord. But you're gonna have to serve somebody." Who is it going to be or what is it going to be, God or mammon? You see, whatever you are willing to sacrifice to, sacrifice for, is your god!

Let me sum this up like this,

The climax of Jesus' application is verse 13: "No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money" (see also Matthew 6:24). If God is our Master, then our wealth will be at His disposal. In other words, the faithful and just steward whose Master is God will employ that wealth in building up the kingdom of God.

- <https://www.gotquestions.org/parable-unjust-steward.html>

VERSES 14-15

As I have said, these religious leaders were listening to what Jesus was saying and as Jesus spoke about riches controlling your life, they did not like it. Now why did the religious leaders literally turn up their noses at Jesus for what He said?

Because they had money and they saw money as a blessing from God. Thus, if you were poor, you were not blessed. Obviously, that was a wrong concept. Now Jesus is going to respond to their snubbing Him in verse 15.

Again, listen to what He tells them. “**... ‘You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.’**”

Here’s the thing. People may honor you because of your wealth, your position or whatever, but God see’s right to the heart of the matter and you cannot be justified outside of Christ! God’s standards were different than what these religious leaders set and they are different than what many set today. Being good doesn’t get you into heaven, being rich does not get you into heaven, but believing in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins does!

And we can put on a show before people, look very spiritual but God knows our hearts and for these religious leaders, their hearts were wicked. They were proud and did not see a need for a Savior because they were righteous before God, at least in their own minds!

VERSES 16-17

John the Baptist’s ministry ended and now we come to the Good News of the New Covenant that is based in the blood of Jesus.

Now please understand this. In saying that it doesn’t negate the Law but it allows us to fulfill it by His cleansing because the penalty for breaking the Law has been paid in full! And people are pressing to get in, jumping over, moving around all those roadblocks that people have set-up preventing them from getting into heaven, just as the Pharisees and Scribes were doing in preventing people from coming to God, to Jesus, the Messiah!

Now let me also say this. Some have come to the faulty conclusion that the Law is bad, the Law is evil, not so. The problem is not the Law, but man, who is evil, is bad.

Listen to what David said in Psalm 19 regarding the Law of God and what it does for us starting in verse 7, **“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward.”** Psalm 19:7-11.

Again, the Law does not fail, we do, and thus, we need a Savior, we need Jesus, which the Law points us to. It is as Paul said in Galatians 3:24-26, **“Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”**

You see, the Law shows us that we are sinners, that we fall short of perfection and it points us to our Savior, it points us to Jesus!

VERSE 18

Marriage is sacred before God and yet, like back then, it is not taken seriously many times. Back in Jesus' day there were two schools of thought regarding divorce. Rabbi Shammai interpreted the word **“uncleanness”** in Deuteronomy chapter 24 as being sexual immorality, he had the conservative view.

Rabbi Hillel basically said you can divorce your wife for any reason, he had the liberal view and the biggest following. I wonder why?

Jesus is telling them that God never intended for divorce but because of the hardness of their hearts it was permitted. The problem is, if you will not obey God in what He is clearly teaching, no matter how much your outward agreement is to what God has said, if you inwardly resist Him, you are wrong, you are rebellious! They were breaking the Law they boasted so much about keeping!

And what we see here is that Jesus taught the ideal regarding marriage and divorce. Thus, it is wrong and it is dangerous for us to establish doctrine based upon what we feel is right, what we want to do.

Jesus also taught that sexual immorality was acceptable grounds for divorce (Matthew 5:31-32, 19:7-9) and later the Apostle Paul added that desertion by an unbelieving spouse was also an acceptable reason (1 Corinthians 7:15).

Then what is Jesus speaking of here in Luke 16:18? I believe what Jesus is speaking of is the person who divorces his wife without Biblical cause and marries another, that person commits adultery.

As we read on we are going to see that Jesus is going to teach about the rich man and Lazarus, which some call a parable. I don't think so, for in parables Jesus doesn't use names as He does here. I think this is an actual story of two individuals that people may have known, they were aware of and could relate to. Listen to what Jesus is saying.

VERSES 19-21

The rich man lived the good life. On the other hand, not far away, was this poor man, Lazarus, and he had absolutely nothing, he had to beg for his food. When it says that he was “**fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table**” Barclay points out, “Food was eaten with the hands and, in very wealthy houses, the hands were cleaned by wiping them on hunks of bread, which were then thrown away. This is what Lazarus [the poor man] was waiting for.”

Now here is the reality. It doesn’t matter if you are rich or poor, one day you will die as we see here with these two men as we read on.

VERSES 22-23

Here we get a glimpse of where people went to prior to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Hades in the Greek and Sheol in the Hebrew, had two compartments in it. One was the place for those that died outside of the faith and were tormented. The other side is called Abraham’s bosom and it is the place that those who died in the faith went to and were comforted until the Messiah came and set them free and now they too are in heaven.

The only people that are in Hell today are those who have died not believing in Jesus and they are awaiting the final judgement in the Lake of Fire that is still to come, making Hell, in a sense, a holding tank until that time.

Notice what we are told in Ephesians 4:8-10, “**Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.’ (Now this, ‘He ascended’ - what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)**”

Thus, those three days and nights He spent in the belly of the earth, He was ministering to those who died in the faith and when He rose, so did they!

Now, please understand that there is no such thing as soul sleep, there is no such thing as annihilation, for Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:8, “**We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.**” Those that die in the Lord go to be with the Lord, those that die outside of the Lord go to Hell and await the final judgment in the Lake of fire! I think that is clear!

For the poor man, Lazarus, he died in the faith believing in the coming Messiah and he is comforted in Abraham’s bosom. For the rich man, he had it all while he was living but now in death, dying apart from faith, he is tormented. And as we will see, he was well aware of what is going on around him. Let’s read on and see what transpires.

VERSES 24-31

What I want you to see here is that the rich man was aware of things. He had pain, he was aware of his surroundings, he recognized Lazarus and he didn’t want his family to follow in his footsteps and end up in Hell!

In fact, now he is so worried about them that he wanted Lazarus to go back and tell them the truth but he is not allowed, why? Doesn’t that seem unfair? The reason is simple and Jesus says it is because they have Moses or the Law and they have the prophets, the Word of God.

The evidence was overwhelming and yet it was ignored by the rich man. The Word of God is living and it is powerful and it will bring us to the Messiah, to Jesus. Paul said in Romans 10:17, “**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**” Faith unto salvation comes by hearing the Word of God and applying it to your life!

What is also interesting here is that Jesus tells the rich man that if one would come back from the dead they still wouldn't believe. Shortly after this another Lazarus is going to die and Jesus will raise him from the dead.

Now what was the response of the religious leaders to this miracle? In John 12:9-11 we read, "**Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.**"

Not only that, but Jesus rose from the dead and they still refused to believe! If you won't believe the Word of God, you won't believe at all!

You see, we all have choices to make in this life but the most important decision is what have you done with Jesus? You see, if He is not Lord and Savior now, in death your decision is sealed, there is no second chance.

Paul put it this way in Hebrews 9:27, "**And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.**" Today is the day of salvation, don't pass it up!