

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Gospel according to Saint Luke the sixteenth chapter beginning at the nineteenth verse, and we read in Jesus' name:

"There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. ²⁰ "But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, ²¹ "desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² "So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ "And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his

bosom. ²⁴ "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' ²⁵ "But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. ²⁶ 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' ²⁷ "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, ²⁸ 'for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' ²⁹ "Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' ³⁰ "And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' ³¹ "But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the

***prophets, neither will they be persuaded
though one rise from the dead.'"***

Heavenly Father, these are Your words and therefore they are the truth. We pray, Lord, that You would increase our faith through them. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

The book is written informing us that "Heaven is Real." That sends a nice message does it not? Grandpa is there, Jesus is there, there's a great war happening there... okay now we're getting a little out of control, but it's a nice thought nonetheless, right? Heaven is Real...

I think I'm going to write a new book, but its title won't be as nice and as 'sweet' as the previous one; I'm going to call mine "Hell is Real Too." That doesn't have as nice

a ring to it. That title isn't so sweet and endearing, is it? And yet, it is no less true.

Yes, heaven is real and so is hell. Friends, here we have the very words of Christ which lay this truth before us: ***there is a heaven
and there is a hell.***

There is a book written by Francis Chan, an evangelical preacher, who is trying to show the short coming of such teaching that we experience on a daily basis. The book is called "Erasing Hell." In this book Chan laments that we, as a nation and as Christians, preach about heaven but very often we leave hell out of the equation.

Heaven is so nice and we want to talk about that. People go and get pretty little wings and play harps and lay on clouds and do whatever we want... but then, that isn't heaven, is it? I've never read that description of heaven in my Bible, but is it not what is

put out by the world and how many people understand heaven?

Hell on the other hand is never taken as serious as it is. Hell is treated with much disrespect. Hell is toyed with. We have ‘devils’ on display in this world as playful little creatures. We have people with the mantra that they would rather be in hell because hell is where the fun people will be. To many, while heaven may be real, hell definitely is not... in fact there are ‘churches’ who teach that there is no hell, that is how far we’ve removed ourselves from the proper understanding of hell.

And don’t we do it too? So often we can treat hell as if it were some imaginary place that we will never experience. We can treat hell like only really bad people can go there. We understand hell as a place for people like Hitler, not for people like Jonah DeDeyne... but is it not a place where both could end

up? Is not hell a place that is possible for each of us to end up in? Is not hell a place that could claim every person here? Sure it is... hell is very real and it could indeed take each and every one of us.

When we take our faith life for granted and do nothing to strengthen it, we are no better than the rich man. Think of what Abraham said to the rich man, “***They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.***” We too have the Scriptures, all of them, but we do not always treat them with the reverence they deserve. We too have Moses, the Law, and we know that we do not keep it at all. We too have the prophets, the coming Christ foretold, and still there are many people who ignore Christ and all that He has done for them. We have the same Scriptures that point to Christ and it is too hard for us to read them, it is too boring, we read it once, we don’t need to hear it again... We have the

same Scriptures and those same Scriptures can condemn us also.

Consider the rich man... no where does Jesus say that he was an overly evil man. No where does Jesus say that this man was a mass murderer or even someone who stole... in fact all we know is that the rich man received his good things in this life, thus we can see that the man focused on this life and not on the next. The rich man cared about money, food, and other things, but there was no focus on God.

But, claims the rich man, if you send someone from the dead to my brothers at least they can then repent. But Abraham tells him, ***“If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.”*** Thus if they, if we, will not listen to the Scriptures we would not listen even if someone rose from the dead. If we will not focus on the

things of God, instead of the things of this world, it will not even help if someone were to come back from the dead. Thus, while the book, “Heaven is Real” is supposed to tell of a boy who came back from heaven, if we will not hear Scripture that book would do nothing and does nothing for anyone... who will not hear the word of Christ.

And what is that word of Christ? What is that message that Jesus so wants us to hear? The message is that told by Moses and the Prophets:

In Deuteronomy 18 Moses tells us that God will raise up another prophet who is greater than Moses.

In Isaiah we hear about the Virgin who will bear a Son. Also in Isaiah we hear about the Son who will be the wonderful counselor, Almighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

In John we hear about the raising of the Son of Man, just as Moses lifted the snake, and foretold about the Christ.

So often, in Scripture, we hear about Christ and what He will do... and if we will not hear those words, then all the money and all the things, and even the words of one come back from the dead will do us no good.

The message of Christ is very simple: Moses and the Prophets told about me, they told you that I would come, they told you that I would redeem all people of the world, they told you that through faith in Me you will have eternal life, they told you that I am God, they told you...

And thanks be to God that we hear these words and we believe them. Thanks be to God that He has given us His Son who did live and die for us. Jesus Christ, who

suffered hell itself while He hung on the cross and was buried for us. Jesus, who rose three days later to proclaim that His life and His death were the perfect atonement for us. This Jesus, Moses and the prophets foretold... it is Jesus who is our Savior, who saves us from hell.

For just as Jesus tells us, heaven is real and there Lazarus is; but so too is hell and the rich man is there. Heaven is reserved for those who have faith in Jesus Christ for their salvation; hell is reserved for the devil and his angels... but when we die apart from Christ we too will end up in hell. In heaven we will be comforted, we will have the tears wiped from our eyes; in hell there will be never-ending torment and pain. In heaven we will see the face of our redeemer, our Savior; in hell we will know that Jesus truly is God and Lord, the redeemer and Savior that we could have been with.

Dear friends in Christ, heaven is real... but so too is hell. Without faith in our Savior we will end up in hell. Without a trust and belief that Jesus lived and died for us, we will end up in never-ending torment. Without Jesus, life is meaningless and hell will truly show us all our faults.

However, dear friends, when we have faith in our Savior Jesus Christ, then we know that we will be in heaven with Him. When we know and believe that Jesus lived and died for each and every one of our sins, we will be able to rely on Him all the more. When we have Jesus, life is complete and joyful (regardless of the hardships), for when this life is over we will be with our Savior, our Redeemer, our Lord who lived and died for each and every one of us.

Thanks be to God for loving us and teaching us this very important lesson about heaven and hell. Thanks be to God for sending His

Son to endure hell on the cross so that through faith in Him we will only know heaven. And thanks be to God that there is indeed a heaven and a hell.

Thanks be to God. Amen.