

Crossing the Chasm

by Thaddeus Barnum

The sermon emphasizes the reality of heaven and the importance of remembering the poor, while also highlighting the chasm between heaven and hell and the devil's use of fear to deceive people.

Duration: 27:07

Scripture: Genesis 28:10-22, Deuteronomy 29:29, Isaiah 6:1-4, Luke 16:19-31, Acts 7:54-60, Revelation 21:4

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of trusting God with the mysteries and unanswered questions in life. He encourages the audience to focus on what God has revealed to us and to rejoice in that knowledge. The speaker also shares a story about a slave who found hope and comfort in a song about angels coming to carry him home. He urges the audience to remember the poor and to bring the gospel, charity, and kindness to those who are suffering. The sermon concludes with a reminder that through Jesus, we have the power to repent and have eternal life.

Transcript

Let, O Lord, our ears hear. Savior, be known to us. For we ask it in the glorious name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen. Good morning. I want to turn our attention this morning to this gospel lesson of chapter 16 of Luke, verses 19 and following, that we just heard.

When I was a young pastor, I was called to go visit a 93-year-old Christian man who was failing in health. And the question that he had for me was what happens to me when I die? He wanted to know. He wanted to testify to us, to me, that he was afraid.

That passage of Hebrews 2 is real, that we have been in the grasp of the fear of death and subject to the fear of death all our lives, for which reason our Savior has come. But that fear of death was real upon him, and he had that sense that was stated, Shakespeare caught in Hamlet, that we're afraid of something dreadful after death, the undiscovered country from which no visitor returns. What is it going to be like? And I know that we can go down to the local drugstore, and the local bookstore, and the local grocery store, and find somebody who's been to heaven and back.

But I thank you, Lord, that it's testified in this passage. It's talked about here. It's talked about by our Lord.

All the authority of heaven rests upon not our superstition and not our opinion, and God knows all of us have opinion, but it rests upon the truth of God's Word, and I want that word to come upon your heart today and set you free. For when the truth of our Savior hits our ears, and we are free, are we not free indeed? And for this reason I appeal to this moment, because our Lord does something here that is rarely done in Scripture. He peels back the glories, the veil between us and heaven.

You see it occasionally, don't you, in the Bible. Every once in a while one of the saints, heaven opens and we can see the glories to come. This is the great statement that was made by Isaiah.

I see the Lord seated upon the temple, high and lifted up. His train fills the temple. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God the Almighty.

We see it once in a while. We see it in Stephen's death as his body's being pummeled by stones. He beholds the Savior.

His eyes see, and every once in a while in Scripture that happens. Jacob with a ladder coming down. Oh, I wish I could spend all the time right there, but this is the only time that same veil is rented.

We see this place of torment. It's almost like we're taken on a tour by our Lord to feel, to see. We meet somebody.

The no-name rich man, we meet him. We see his suffering. We see his torment.

Jesus takes us here. The veil has come back. And during my days as a pastor, all these days I have found that there have been times I have met with people who are so overcome by this thing of the place of torment that the devil binds them in it.

They don't understand the lake of fire, and the devil begins to ridicule and mock God because of it. Mock his purpose. Is he really good? Is he really just? Is he really holy? And I can only say this.

I try my best with these people, although sometimes they're so locked and bound. I try with them to give the gift of Deuteronomy 29, which says the great passage, the secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the revealed things, they belong to us. Take what he's revealed and rejoice and celebrate, but what we don't know, surrender to him.

Many of you have gone through trauma in your life, and you don't understand why it happened, why God allowed it. It's a secret. I don't know.

Trust God with it. There are many such mysteries in life. We need to trust the Lord with the things that belong to the Lord, but the revealed things, they belong to us.

And I want to tell you some things that Jesus gives us in this passage. The first one, the first thing, the first thing that happens is this poor man who has got no justice, as if his prayers have never been answered. He's poor.

He's hungry. Even the dogs are licking the sores on his body, as if no prayer, no justice has ever been given him, and he dies. And this is the only time it says it like this.

Look at your Bible. Look at it. It actually says it.

It's amazing. The angels came to carry him home. The angels came.

The angels. It says it here, and I could tell my 93-year-old friend, oh dear friend, there's gonna come a time where your eyes shall close and you shall not be alone. The angels shall come and take you home.

Do I speak in parables? Is Jesus speaking in parables? No. If so, would he have not said, I've got a story, a parable to tell you? This is the wonder of slaves back in the 1860s. The slave who had come off the hard oppressions of the slaveries of those times.

An African, an African-American who came off the hardship of being treated as valueless and nobody, and he came back one day, so the story is told because the Lord had given a song in his heart. That song, I looked over Jordan. What did I see coming for to carry me home? A band of angels coming after me, coming for to carry me home.

He had hope that was not here, it was home. Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home. Is it not, I know it's not Anglican, I've ruined your day, I know that, but that's where the song came from.

A Negro spiritual underneath, deep inside our culture that saw this isn't it, that angels are gonna come. He actually called for the chariots of Elijah to come. The father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen, he was going to go first-class, that one.

The second thing we learned from this text is extremely vital and that is this, he's alive. He has died, he's alive. We see you dead, you look dead, you are dead, but Jesus tells that when you put your eyes down, the angels come to take you home and you are alive.

This is what's going countercultural. There is a tremendous movement in our culture today, dominating us. People are calling themselves nuns, n-o-n-e-s, nun.

They have no religion, they have no God, they're atheists. They don't believe in heaven, they don't believe in hell, they don't believe in God. It's this growing, this growing movement that is in the heart of the people that are here and at the end of the day all we are is biology.

That's all we are. We came from some slime in a pond, that's the nature of it. There was a big bang, don't know prior to Big Bang, just live with that peace and then it happened.

Rocks, material, I'm giving you a very fast course on this. The intellectuals, they all hold it and somehow out of the slime, behold, we're watching football. I don't know how that happens.

It's all a mystery, I know it's all a mystery, but we're all, we are biology and one day we will, we will put our, and we will go back to the dust and we will not be. That's the dominant thing, we will not be. The secularists teach us that religions don't matter, that we will simply die, they don't have funerals anymore, they have got celebrations of life and they're, and then we're told that we're going to be in a better place, be in a better place, and we're going to be with our loved ones.

That's the nature of it. Now they've got no proof, they've got no fact, it just sounds comforting and so they have a celebration of life, they are somewhere in a better place. The devil is telling our kids, our younger generation, that is living in pain and hurt and abandonment and neglect and listening to the devil's sounds all around them and are in pain in their soul.

The reason there's so much suicide in our day because the devil's telling us that death is good, death is a friend, death will get you out of the present conversation that you're in. You'll find relief, you'll find sleep, you'll find, you'll find that death is your friend, it will take you out of your pain, out of your torment. The devil's lying to them, taking their life thinking that this is right, we die, we live.

It's always been that way. The Lord created us for life and Lazarus lives. Heaven is real, he's in the bosom of Abraham.

He is fully and completely alive. Heaven is not some metaphysical myth, mystical, abstract concept. It is real, as real as the first heaven and earth and the first Eden was real.

And the Lord walking in the cool of the day, as real as our Savior, telling the thief on the cross, today you shall be with me in paradise. As real as our Savior himself who came and stood upon ground with the disciples and he said, I am not spirit, touch me. I am body, I am bone, I am flesh, touch me, give me something to eat.

Real. And that's why in this scripture you're finding everything extremely physical. Lazarus, take your finger, touch it in the water and cool the tongue.

It's all extremely physical. Just as our Savior said, there's coming a day, there's coming a day when Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the prophets, when all the people East, West, North and South are gonna come into the kingdom of God and they're gonna sit down at table and we are going to eat with him. We're going to sup with him.

Real, tangible, bodies, alive, alive. The suffering and the pain will be no more and death will not have us. Satan will not have us.

And that's the amazing construct. Again, this passage, unique to the Bible, it's the only time Jesus shows us that chasm, that uncrossable chasm, that chasm no one can pass by. For Lazarus, this is the best of news.

Is it not? Is it not? Is it not the best of news? Why? Because there's no more garden serpent that's going to deceive. Satan's not going to be there to tempt. I will not fall to temptation.

I will not fall to sin. I will not fall to, I will not fall from grace. I'm home, I'm here, and I'm here permanently and forever.

Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. No more, no more, no more assaults upon us.

Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. I love the fact, friend, if you have ever been abused in life, if someone has abused you so hard and so, so long as poor Lazarus has been abused, please watch your Bible on this passage.

Oh, deeply drink from this passage, I beg of you, because when that sound comes from the place of torment, he cannot address Lazarus. He addresses Abraham. Lazarus never speaks.

Abraham stands to speak on behalf. The abuser cannot hurt and touch, not in the glory. For this, my friend, rejoice.

Rejoice and be proud. Your Savior has rescued you. Your champion has come.

Your abuser cannot touch you. I wish I could stop, but with equal force, our Savior does the opposite, and so the rich man also dies. The rich man in this text has burial.

Lazarus, the poor man, no doubt his body was simply tossed in a common grave, valueless. This one rich with his money had burial, and his atheism did not work. When he closed his eyes, he did not become biology and form back into the evolutionary natural selection that we've been raised with.

No, no, he too lives. All the stuff we've heard about no God and no heaven and no eternity and no heaven and no hell and who cares and all that matters is who won the game yesterday and have pleasure and have wonderful things in this life. Eternity does matter, and now he opens his eyes to know that the philosophies of atheism and secularism have failed him.

That the devil's lies, that death is sleep, that death is comforting. It's lies. It's always been lies, and the worst part about it is that many of us have family who have gone through years and years of being in church, and they've heard it in church, but they've never heard the saving power.

The saving power of Jesus who comes to rescue the soul. They've got all the words. Paul said it this way.

He said they have the form of godliness, but they've denied its power, and so we bury them in the traditions of the church without giving them the Savior of the church. Same thing. It's just lies, and everything is real.

As real as heaven is, so is this place called Hades or hell or this place of torment, and he has got real, real body. He has a real tongue that needs cooling. He has a real voice that cries out, and the worst part about this is he's alone.

There's no Abraham's side. He's alone. Nobody to comfort, nobody to give counsel, nobody to come alongside.

He's alone, and he in this story has no name, which means that the atheistic principle actually works, because if I'm just biology, then I don't have value. I don't have name. I'm just a piece of dust off the face of the earth.

He's got no name, no value, almost like no worth, and worse again, he sees that chasm that separates the place of torment from the glories, the glory, but worse yet, he sees the glories. He can behold from where he is. Not just behold, it's in talking distance.

He can look, and amazingly, did you know this? He knows Abraham by name. I've never figured that out, ever, ever. On the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples say, Moses, Elijah, how did they know? How did they know? Don't tell me there were name tags in heaven.

No, no. I rebuke that. No.

I know the greeter ministry is gonna call me in the morning, I don't doubt it, but I want to say that he could see and know Abraham by name, Abraham the father, father Abraham, because he knows he's the father of faith, who by the way, also was rich, but used his riches to be rich toward God, and came to a faith, Genesis 15, 6, where he believed God, and faith was given to father Abraham, who became the father of sons and daughters from that point on, who were sons and daughters not of blood, but sons and daughters of faith, and now he has in his bosom Lazarus, who came to that, we must say implicitly we

know, came to that faith. And the man in the flames of torment sees and calls out, please let Lazarus be my servant, still with that rich man-itis, still thinking Lazarus, the poor man, will become his servant to dip his finger into the cool water, to touch his tongue. Oh, he's not Lazarus, the poor man, anymore.

He is Lazarus, the saved. He is Lazarus, the beloved. He is Lazarus, the saint of God.

Is he not? That's when he learns of this chasm between the uncrossable chasm, and the permanence of that story, and the lack of it, and he cries out for mercy, and father Abraham says no. It almost appears father Abraham says, actually the rich cannot come here, and only the poor can, but we know from the Bible that's not what the Bible teaches. We heard it in the epistle today, that those who have riches are not to set their hope on their uncertainty of riches, but their hope on God.

That they are to be generous, that they are to be ready to share, that they are to be rich in good works, pouring out that which has been poured in, that when you come to saving grace, when you come to know Jesus, you know and learn how to give as he's given to you, and we know the difference, do we not? We don't give to get from God, we give because we've gotten from God. Did you get that? We give because he sets his heart free. He sets our hearts free when he pours out the love of God into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he's given us, and out it comes.

Out it comes in fullness. It's just that the rich have a proclivity to put their hope on riches, and die in their riches, and the poor have a proclivity to cry out unto God saying, I need mercy, and the general rule is that we've got to become poor in spirit to know the riches of the kingdom of God, do we not? It's always been the story. When you come to know the Lord, we never forget the poor.

This is what the sin of Sodom was. You'll find this in Ezekiel 16 verse 49, that they lived in prosperity and in ease. They ate, and they drank, and they lived in ease, and here's what it says, and they neglected the poor and the needy.

We never do that, and yet this man drove by Lazarus every day, the dogs licking his sores, and so and so he cries out, I've got family, I've got family, you've got to attend to my family, I've got five brothers, then send Lazarus, if you're not going to rescue me, send Lazarus, send Lazarus to my brothers. Urgently warning, suddenly now he's urgently warning, and Abraham comes back, and he says, no, no, he says, they've got they've got the Bible, they've got Moses, they've got the prophets, they've got enough. No, says the man, interesting how he rebukes his father Abraham, no, he says no, my brothers, I know them, they need a miracle, they need somebody to come back from the dead, otherwise they're gonna play golf on Sunday, they're gonna go out and be entertained, they're gonna go out and have fun in the world, they're not going to hear this, they're not gonna do something spectacular, and father Abraham says, if they won't believe when this is preached, taught, spoken, and heard, what God has given, then neither will they believe if the most spectacular event of all time, that one should rise from the dead, and he has, and if he has, why does the world live today the way it is? Why are we trying to beg people to come to Christ? Why are we coming to people alongside people and saying, no, no, you're believing in lies, why is it still, one has come, he has died for us, he has risen for us, and everywhere we go we tell people, do what the Bible says, repent of your sin, turn to Jesus, he's come to rescue us, he would that none would perish, but all come to the wonders and the grace of this eternal life, am I wrong? Is this not his heart? Is this not our heart? And yet the world is spinning into a deeper darkness, a deeper darkness than ever before, and the mandate for us twofold, we have got to go preach this gospel, family home to everywhere, and second, we always remember the poor.

We're about to hear from Tanya, who's known this conversation, she's part of the Franklin Graham, thank you Jesus for Franklin Graham, who has kept the children of the world at the center of all of us, that we might do boxes, that we might give, that we might remember, we bring gospel, we bring charity, we bring kindness, we bring resources to those who are suffering, do we not never forget the poor as we go out to proclaim the wonders of this gospel, because that's what we do. We're not here to be entertained, we're to hear the Scriptures, we're not here in a generation that longs to be entertained, we're here to let the Holy Spirit come upon the Word of God, and move inside of us that are hearing, suddenly we hear, and suddenly we receive the grace to know, Jesus my Lord, my Savior, you've come for me, and he gives us the power to repent of the things that need to be repented of, that we might know, that we know, that we know, that we know, we live because he lives, that we shall always live, that death cannot have us, that the undiscovered country has become discovered, and we might know that we have citizenship there, you and I, for our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him all things under his control will transform our lowly bodies, so they will be like his glorious body. And so the great evangelist Dwight Moody, back a hundred and some years ago, oh what an evangelist he was, oh if only he'd been Anglican, he'd have been perfect.

That is so wrong, that is so wrong, that great Chicago evangelist. He wrote these words, he said, someday you'll read in the paper, Dwight Moody is dead. Don't you believe a word of it.

At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now. I shall have gone up higher, that is all, out of this old clay into a house that is immortal, a body that death cannot touch, a body that sin cannot taint, a body fashioned like unto his glorious body. Oh don't you believe a word of it.

My friend, if you're a grieving heart, a grieving soul, for somebody who has died, somebody you know, somebody you love, take comfort here. This is the rich resource to come. If you're frightened about death and what it will do with you, my friend, take comfort, take heart, because soon enough you who know Jesus has come for you, you shall close your eyes and that day will come and the angels are going to be there.

They're going to come, they're gonna sing, and they are gonna take you home to Jesus.

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