

Luke 16:14-31 Money, Marriage and Hades Pt 2

The Overarching theme of 15-16 is a message to the religious crowd of the day: You're missing the heart of God because you're too interested in yourself.

That has several outcomes:

- You no longer look for the lost: sheep and coins
- You no longer welcome the lost in: the Prodigal Son
- You use the wealth of this world to look after yourselves instead of earning eternal rewards by building God's kingdom: the Unjust Steward
- Your heart is divided between worshipping God and worshipping mammon because money helps you get what you want: vs 10-13
- You have rationalized your sin and instead of obeying the word of God you are exalting things that are an abomination in His sight, for example, divorce.

As we close out the chapter, Jesus has one final warning for them – an attempt to help them see the consequences of continuing down the self-obsessed trail they are on.

[14](#)The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him.[15](#)And he said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

[16](#)“The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it. [\[fn5\]](#) [17](#)But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void.

This is important, because you have to remember who the Pharisees were – these are the people who prided themselves on their obedience to the Law – remember, they were the ones who were tithing out of their spice racks back in chapter 11. These are the guys who take the Sabbath so literally that they get upset when Jesus heals people on their holy day. These are the guys who would pray in the streets so that everyone would see them and wore special robes so people recognized them – they took their religion seriously, and they got their religion from the Bible.

But they kept it their way; they decided which parts were to be kept and how rigorously. And while they would go to insane lengths to keep certain parts of the law, other parts would be completely overlooked. They had selective obedience to God's Word – a problem many of us still have today – we pick and choose which things we can do, which parts we can keep without it being too much of an inconvenience. But Jesus is pointing out that **all** of God's word still applied to these men, including His instruction on, for example, marriage and divorce.

[18](#)“Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

You need a little background information here. Remember the Pharisees were like a religious denomination, and that denomination was headed up by the scribes who were also known as Rabbis – they were teachers and leaders who determined exactly how the law was to be kept.

You had both conservative rabbis and liberal rabbis. On the issue of marriage and divorce, which had been a hot button issue for sometime in Judaism, you had both opinions. Rabbi Shammai led a conservative school that taught that a woman could only be divorced for marital unfaithfulness or for not being a virgin when she got married.

On the other hand, you had the famous Rabbi Hillel who taught that a good Jewish man could cast his wife aside for any number of reasons:

- For being seen talking in the street with other men
- For raising her voice loud enough to be heard by someone in another house
- For poor cooking
- For not being as good looking as some other woman which would arouse jealousy in his heart.
- Basically, you could get a divorce for almost any reason you wanted if it proved that you were righteous and she was sinful – it was all her fault.

But when the Pharisees asked Jesus what His position was on divorce in Mt 19 He answered the question by pointing them back to the natural order. God created Adam, and it wasn't good for him to be alone, so God created Eve to complete the man. The two became one flesh, so Jesus says in Mt 19:6 'What God has joined together, let no man separate.'

God hates divorce. It's an abomination in the sight of God because it destroys His creation. It follows right in the footsteps of Adam and Eve who placed their own desires above God's instruction, did what was right in their own eyes, and as a result destroyed Creation and themselves. It's the same thing the Pharisees were doing in Jesus' day and it's the same thing people do in our time – "I know the Bible says...*but*..."

Now, I want to add a little commentary here and say that I know that some of you have been through divorces. Some were your fault; some were not your fault. I know the subject is complex and that there are many factors surrounding each case. I also want you to know that I teach and believe that divorce is not the unforgiveable sin. And we in Calvary Chapel do not believe, as some do, that a divorce 15 years ago *before you even became a Christian* means that you can never serve in ministry.

So, I do not intend to offend anyone who has sinned in the past or that has been sinned against, but for the sake of the present and the future, and out of allegiance to God, I must address this issue with the severity with which God views it.

God's original design was for one man to be with one woman, to transfer their allegiance to each other, more so than to mom and dad, and to be together 'til death do us part.

So when you get a divorce, *you destroy what God has made* – you take the one and try to turn it back into two.

We try to make that process clean and simple nowadays. We try to pretend like divorce is an easy process, an acceptable and common one, *but it is not*. It's not like quitting your job or resigning some membership, C.S. Lewis says in *Mere Christianity*, that it is more like surgery that removes both of your legs. It's an amputation. You had become one flesh with that individual – you had fulfilled God's design for human relationships and now that one flesh must be ripped, torn apart.

That is why it is so painful even to break up in dating relationships – parts of your life had been woven together with the other individual and now there will be pain as the threads of your life have to be unwoven.

On the flip side of all of this, this also means that marriage done right means there is no possibility of adultery or cheating – if all of you is joined to all of her, there is nothing else left to be joined to anyone else.

If you want to protect your marriage, give yourself entirely to your spouse – don't hold anything back, and there won't be the chance of any loose threads being woven together with anyone else. Don't be like the Pharisees who were willing to walk out on their vows because they wanted something better for themselves – be like Jesus who gave Himself for others and held nothing back. -----

Now Jesus wraps everything up by showing us the end that is in store for people who reject God's word so they can do what they think seems best:

[19](#)“There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.[20](#)And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores,[21](#)who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.[22](#)The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. [\[fn6\]](#) The rich man also died and was buried,[23](#)and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

It's hard to know whether this is a parable or an actual historical event, regardless of which it is, Jesus is telling it to make a point, and we can still learn that point from Him.

So let's look at the setting, Hades. Before Jesus died and made a way to Heaven for all those who had lived by faith in God's promise to send a Messiah, everyone who died went to a holding area called Hades which had two sides – a side of suffering and difficulty for those who had rejected God and a side of comfort, also referred to as “Abraham's bosom” for those who lived righteously.

Once Jesus died however, all the righteous were led to Heaven and now, according to Paul, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

[24](#)And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’[25](#)But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.’[26](#)And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’[27](#)And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house—[28](#)for I have five brothers [\[fn7\]](#)—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’[29](#)But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’[30](#)And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’[31](#)He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

We learn a few things here about what life is like after death:

1. Present condition is no guarantee of future position – there’s a shocking reversal here in the afterlife because the Pharisees would have thought that this rich man was guaranteed a place in heaven – after all, they loved money and thought that God poured out financial blessings on the people He loved and withheld them from people who sinned. If you were poor, diseased, or injured, it was probably God taking things out on you. But the role reversal here proves that is not always the case. Not all who have it easy in this life will have it easy in the next and vice-versa.
2. There is no swapping teams in eternity – ‘a great chasm’ was fixed between those who suffered and those who were comforted and there was no going back and forth. There is no chance of changing your mind after you are dead, and there is no mention of anything like a purgatory where if you just hold out long enough it’ll all be over soon. Done is done.
3. You’ve already received the best warning you are ever going to get – God has provided us with His Word and if we won’t receive it, nothing else will get our attention.

That’s important for us to understand, because we don’t live in a time and place where we see as many striking miracles as the people who were alive during the Exodus or during Jesus’ ministry – we don’t see as many and as wonderful of things as they did, but we still have the Word of God and that is all we need.

The rich man’s brothers had access to the Word, but apparently he was concerned that would not be enough – they wouldn’t listen to it alone. And that, really, was the whole point Jesus was trying to make here – He was showing the Pharisees the danger of their position – they had the Law and the Prophets, it wasn’t changing, and yet they weren’t obeying it. Time and time again, they had found ways to elevate their own selfish desires over the requirements of God’s Word.

Now, in the very near future, Jesus Himself is going to rise from the dead, and just as we see here, ‘even though someone were to rise from the dead, they still would not believe.’

It's a deadly danger for us as well. It is too easy for us to hear the Word of God, understand it, *and reject it*. It is too easy for us to talk our way out of it, to rationalize our actions, and postpone or dismiss the need for obedience. If God's word is plainly speaking to some area of your life – you must conform to it, do not reject it any longer.

One of the clear messages we learn from this section is the value of **now**. What you do today really does carry over into eternity – so hear God's word, take it in. He has determined that *this is the best way to reach you*. Be transformed by it – when it says die to your self – die; when it says hope in Him – hope, walk by faith and obey.

Let me remind of the God that is demanding this of you by just reviewing what we have seen in these two chapters,

- He is a God who values the lost
- He welcomes the repentant dirty son who finally comes home
- He blesses us with unrighteous wealth **so that** we can bless others *and then rewards us eternally for doing so!*
- He loves His sons and daughters and wants spouses to love each other and be committed to one another *just as He is*.
- Sometimes He allows us to suffer a bit on this earth for reasons we can't really understand, but He promises to comfort us for all of eternity.

God promises to be a debtor to no man – if you are obedient to Him, if you faithfully follow Him, *you won't be missing out on anything*. There is no need to hold back, there is no need to find excuses for your disobedience, just give in to Him, submit to Him, die to yourself and live for Him.

PRAY.

The problem was they were doing it all for themselves and so that others would think higher of them. They wanted to appear Godly on the outside, but had no true knowledge of God on the inside.

This condition still exists today – in some churches men and women who claim the title of priest, pastor, or reverend get all decked out – have some really extravagant robes, stoles, and hats but lead cold lives and speak to cold people. Now that's not 100% true across the board, but the point is, just getting all dressed up and going through special liturgies, saying certain prayers, doesn't make you more godly all by itself.

We used to say that you take any guy off the street, put him in a set of the Marine Corps' Dress Blues – their ceremonial uniform, and no matter how bad he looked before you got your hands on him, he was bound to look better in that uniform. And it's true – he might look better, but that doesn't mean he has changed on the inside – the same was true of these Pharisees – they dressed the part, but they hadn't been changed on the inside.

But it is possible to live by very holy rules and never know God. It is possible to be very disciplined and not know God. It is possible to be very 'good' and not know God. These men had surrounded themselves with all the trappings of religion, but did not know God, they only knew their rules.

And when you take rituals and rules and separate them from relationship they grow cold and meaningless and eventually they become burdensome. The next thing you know you are looking at ways to get around them because they don't mean anything to you anymore.

That's where these guys were now.