

The Great Divide

(Luke 16:19-31)

Introduction

1. [Series] Resonate: Tune into Jesus' frequency to experience the power of the gospel & impact the culture.
2. Jesus teaches about what happens after we die.
 - a. Various theories: Naturalism, universalism, reincarnation, annihilationism, purgatory.
 - b. But what does God & His Word say?

Your eternity isn't based on what you've "earned" [Luke 16:19-23]

1. Contrast of "blessings" in life
 - a. [19] Rich man: Wears royal Tyrian purple; eats gourmet food at his personal banquet daily.
 - i. Reminds us of the rich man who built bigger barns for himself & lived for himself (cf. Luke 12:13-21).
 - b. [20-21] Lazarus: Poor; ill; hungry; unable; unclean; unloved.
 - c. Pharisees would consider the rich man "blessed" by God because he earned it, & the poor man "cursed."
2. Reversal of fortune
 - a. [22a] Poor man dies & is carried directly into fellowship/banquet in Heaven (cf. Luke 14:15-24).
 - i. "Abraham's bosom/side" (cf. John 13:25): Lazarus seated as guest of honor next to Abe at banquet.
 - ii. Went from wishing for leftovers from the rich man's table to honored guest at the table in Heaven.
 - iii. Lazarus: "Whom God helps" because he has to depend on God.
 - b. [22b-23] Rich man dies & goes directly to Hell, where he's in conscious torment.
 - i. Lesson 1: When you die, you go directly to Heaven or Hell (cf. Heb 9:27).
 - ii. Lesson 2: In hell, people suffer eternal, conscious torment (cf. Matt 25:46).
 - iii. Like Gehenna, it is a damnable, wretched, cursed place (cf. 2 Kgs 23:10; 2 Chr 28:3; Isa 66:24; 30:33; Mark 9:48).
3. Did the rich man go to Hell because he was wealthy?
 - a. [23] No, Abraham (who was wealthy) was in Heaven to welcome Lazarus.
 - b. What's the difference between Abe & the rich man?
 - i. Jesus taught that good stewards of God's wealth generously bless others (16:1-13), vs. Pharisees (lovers of money) who justify themselves by personal effort & earning apart from God (16:14-18).
 - c. The Pharisees would be shocked: Your eternal destiny isn't based on what you've "earned" in this life.
 - i. Truth: None of us deserve Heaven. We're all sinful & deserve Hell; we are Lazarus needing to depend on God for help.
 - ii. We don't pay for God's goodness, we respond to it by being good stewards for the glory of God & good of others.
 - d. Application: Are you trying to earn your way into Heaven & pay God to be good to you? Or do you know He's already good & respond to His goodness by being a good steward with your wealth?

Hell is eternal separation from God [Luke 16:24-26]

1. How to go to Hell
 - a. [24] The rich man knows he deserves to be separated from God's goodness, so asks for relief.
 - b. [25] The rich man had the opportunity to be a worshiper & steward, but squandered it living for himself, saying "no" to God.
 - c. If you spend your whole life saying "no" to Jesus, eventually He says "OK"; "not now" becomes not ever.
 - d. Those who live for themselves & don't belong to Jesus, this life is as good as it gets; this is your Heaven.

- e. Those who belong to Jesus & depend on Him, this life is as bad as it gets; this is your Hell.
2. [26] Hell is an uncrossable separation from God
 - a. How can a loving God cause eternal suffering in Hell?
 - b. God is loving, but also holy/just; He's just as holy as He is loving.
 - c. Hell was actually created for Satan & his angels (cf. Matt 25:41).
 - d. Hell is horrible because we are sinful: It is where we don't have to worship, follow, obey, enjoy Jesus; get to be lord & god over ourselves; do as we please without moral restriction; absent of God's presence & effects.
 - e. You can't walk away from God (the source of life, goodness, joy, holiness & love), & still experience His benefits.

Response to the Word determines your eternity [Luke 16:27-31]

1. If eternal destiny is not based on what we've "earned" in this life, then what?
 - a. [27-28] Rich man doesn't want his brothers to repeat his mistakes.
 - i. He requests Lazarus be sent back from the dead to warn them.
 - b. [29] Abe's response: God's Word is sufficient to reveal God's will to them.
 - c. Both the Old & New Testament reveal God, His ways, what to do with life & resources & people, what Heaven & Hell are like.
 - d. *Application:* Are you responding to the Word God has given you? Your eternity depends on it.
2. [30-31] If they won't obey when they have God's Word, then someone back from the dead won't convince them.
 - a. Jesus is telling a story, but really speaking to the Pharisees (as the rich men) & Himself (as One who will return from the dead), & their response to Him.
 - b. We have both the written Word (Bible) & resurrected Word (Jesus) on how to experience life here & to come.
 - c. But we are like the Pharisees, demanding more proof/another sign, when we've been given all we need.
 - d. *Application:* We can respond to the invitation by repenting from worship of/living for ourselves to worship of/living for Jesus.

Conclusion

1. For rich/poor, Pharisees, you & me, we need a change of heart & behavior because we're all sinful by nature & by choice.
 - a. The end point of our direction in life is Hell.
 - b. You can't pay your way into Heaven based on human effort & earnings.
 - c. We need a Savior, & His name is Jesus.
2. *Challenge:* Heaven & Hell are real. When God calls you by His sovereign grace, are you responding?