Palm Sunday Luke 19:28-42. Jesus wept. Why? A common condition of mankind. -

They are not getting it. Hebrews 10:32-39. Background, people that needed encouragement, renewed commitment, persevere! At a Turning point, should I go back or carry on? With all of the evidence so far presented The writer of Hebrews is really saying, this is the truth, if you deny the truth what else have you got? We might get upset that **Jesus said I am the only way, He also said I am the truth, what is not truth is a lie.** So we have this stern warning. Hebrews 10:26-31. Addressed to ex-Jews, Talks about punishment, judgement, raging fire….. Hell.

I don’t like talking about it and you don’t like hearing it, but here it is.

One of the things that troubles people most about Christianity is the Christian teaching that God is a judge who consigns people to hell. Basically the objection goes like this: "How can you possibly reconcile the concept of judgment and hell with the idea of a loving God? They just don't go together." And yet the idea of hell is clearly talked about in the Bible with Jesus talking about it more than anyone else. We are ok with love, mercy, forgiveness, salvation – **but saved from what?**

One pastor when asked about Hell says "Well, one thing I believe is that the biblical imagery of hell-fire is probably metaphorical." Immediately the person says, "Whew!" But then I add, "I think it's metaphorical for something probably infinitely worse than fire."

So I’d like to spend just a little time talking about hell because I think it helps put our own heart, our relationship with this world and the love of God in perspective. Let’s try and gain a Biblical Understanding of Hell, just scratching the surface.

To help us, The parable in Luke 16:19–31

1. Helps Us Understand Ourselves. Without the doctrine of hell, I don't think you can really understand your own heart and it’s natural bent and our need of a savior, to be redeemed!

This parable has two characters: a rich man and a poor man. One of the things that commentators have pointed out is that this is the only parable in which a character—the poor man—has a proper name. If one character has a name, you would think the other character—the rich man—would have a name. But he doesn't. **the contrast is deliberate**. Let's focus on the rich man for a moment. He was probably not an atheist or a pagan. At that time in Israel, most rich people would have believed in the God of the Bible. **This man would have prayed to the God of the Bible and obeyed the laws of the God of the Bible. But here he is in hell, without a name. Why? In verse 25, Abraham says to the rich man, "Remember that in your lifetime you had your good things—the things that you built your life on."** This man was in it for himself.

What is the thing you really live for? What is your ultimate value? What is that which gives meaning to your life? What is your indentity? For the rich man, Status and wealth had been the basis for his identity, and now that the status and wealth are gone, there is no "him" left. He is nameless. When you take away his ultimate thing—his wealth and status—he has no identity.

Søren Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, offers an interesting **definition of sin, which he defines as building your identity on anything but God.** The traditional definition of sin is breaking God's law. While Kierkegaard agrees that breaking God's law is wrong, he wonders whether that's a sufficient definition. His reason is the Pharisees. Kierkegaard says: “The Pharisees follow the law fastidiously, yet they're lost. Why? The Pharisees serve as their own Savior and Lord to earn their own salvation. They try to put God in the position where, because they are so good, God has to bless them, answer their prayers, give them a good life, and take them to heaven. But when Pharisees try to earn their own salvation by observing the law, they are actually building their identity not on God, but on their moral performance. Their self-worth is based on their morality and their religiosity, and it destroys their character. Why? Because what they are doing is a sin. They are building their identity on anything besides God. They are turning good things into ultimate things.”

if I look at anything in this life and say, "If I have that, or do that, then I have importance and value, and if I don't have that, I am nothing"—I are placing my hope in something other than God. money, your career, talents, looks; relationships if you power, approval, comfort, or control; if you look at anything and **make it more important than the love and knowledge of God,** then what you really worship, is something other than God. It has become an idol, an enemy of God. This misplaced focus creates **turmoil in our hearts, a spiritual fire in your heart. That's what the metaphor for fire is about.** As in Hebrews 10:27, a raging fire. Fires build and consume.

Think about the devastation of addiction. It is a picture of hell. **Disintegration** happens, because as the addiction grows stronger, you need more and more of the addictive substance to get more and more of a kick, a high, a sense of satisfaction and yet are never satisfied. Another part of addiction **is isolation**. You have to lie and defend yourself. You are always blaming everyone and everything else for your problems. You say, "Nobody understands me, and everybody's against me!" Another part of addiction **is denial**—an inability to see what's really happening. You get **more and more out of touch with reality**. Insanity. Do you want to change? No.

Let’s apply this to something a little less blatant than a full blown addition. We all have faults, things we over look or put up with. Depression, bad attitudes, unforgiveness, greed jealousy, lust, fear, ….you know “acceptable sins.”

After death the soul and your personal consciousness go on forever. —what does that mean? C. S. Lewis puts the two together and offers an answer. He writes that Christianity's assertion that we are going to go on forever is either true or false. He then goes on to write that “if I'm only going to live eighty years or so, there are a good many things not worth bothering about. But that changes if I'm going to go on living forever. Perhaps my bad temper or my jealousy are gradually getting worse— so gradually that the increase in my lifetime will not be very noticeable. But it might be absolute hell in a million years. In fact, if Christianity is true, hell is precisely the correct term for it. Left to ourselves totally alone.

You see, it's not a question of whether God sends us "to hell." In every one of us there is something growing up which will be hell unless it is delt with by submitting our lives to Jesus.

Let me sum up my thoughts: **Hell is a freely-chosen identity** based on something else other than God that goes on forever. But even while you disintegrate, you refuse to admit what hell is. You think that it is God who casts in hell, but it is a self-chosen identity.

There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says in the end, "Thy will be done." All that are in hell choose it. Without that self choice, it wouldn't be hell.

1. Hell helps us understand this world. There are many people who are afraid that if you believe in a God of judgment and the doctrine of hell, you will have disdain for classes of people—that you will be oppressive and develop an “holier than thou.” Attitude. But look at verse 25, When Abraham looks down from heaven into hell and speaks to this rich man—this absolutely-out-of-touch-with-reality man—notice what he calls him: "Son." Commentators say there is pathos in Abraham's use of this word—a real sadness, a sense of tragedy. Anyone who believes the Bible looks with great sadness at people who are on their way to the fire of hell. There is no sense in which we would disdain those who are going—not if we understand what hell is like. And yet the Bible tells us there is a hell and people are going there. That’s repulsive to our western minds focused on mercy and forgiveness. And yet if we are to understand God’s love we must also understand His justice. Love is not just a feeling right, but doing right.

Pastor Timothy Keller asks us to Consider what Miroslav Volf shares As a Croatian, who had first-hand experience with the terrible violence in the Balkans. He saw people locked in a cycle of vengeance and retaliation for years and years. But he says that the cycle of retaliation was not fueled by a belief in a God of judgment. It was **fueled by a lack of belief in a God of judgment.** He writes: "If God were not angry at injustice, that God would not be worthy of worship. The only means of prohibiting all recourse to violence by ourselves is to insist that judgment is legitimate only when it comes from God. The idea, that the practice of nonviolence requires a belief in divine vengeance, will be unpopular with many, but it takes the quiet of a suburban home to believe that human nonviolence results from a belief in God's refusal to judge. In a land soaked in the blood of the innocent, it will invariably die with other pleasant captivities of the liberal mind." Volf is saying that if you've talked to people who have seen their homes burned, their family members killed and raped, how are you going to keep them from picking up the sword and being sucked into the cycle of violence and retaliation? What are you going to say? Are you going to say, "Well, you know, violence doesn't solve anything?" Not only will such moralizing not touch their hearts, it shows no concern for justice. Anybody who has been wronged says justice has to be done. Volf says the only resource he knows that is powerful enough to pacify the human heart's desire for justice, while at the same time can keep people from getting sucked into a cycle of blood and vengeance, is to say there is a God who will put everything right. If you don't believe in a God like that, you will pick up the sword. Volf writes that the only resource strong enough to help Croatians live in peace on earth is a belief in a God of judgment. Hell is crucial for understanding justice, and knowing the love of God. Romans 12:19.

1. Hell helps us understand the love of God. "Wait a minute," you say. "This is the worst idea of all! The whole idea of a God of judgment seems opposed to the idea of a God of love." But you're wrong, with all due respect. Look at the end of our passage. What does the rich man ask of Abraham? He asks for his five brothers. He says: I want a miracle. **Send Lazarus back**. If Lazarus suddenly came up out of the ground in front of the **five brothers**, that would be a spectacular miracle. But Abraham tells the rich man that approach will never work. Fear of hell and damnation will never change the fundamental structures of a human heart. The fear of hell alone will never keep you out of it. Fear of hell will not turn people from their Selfcenteredness, Self-absorption, Me, me, me, attitude. That's what's wrong. So when you scare people—when people say, "I better be good because of fear of hell and damnation"—they won't end up being good for goodness sake or for God's sake, for his pleasure. They're just going to be good for their own sake. It's just more selfishness! In other words, God will still be nothing more than a means to an end to get the things upon which they are building their identity. Thus getting moral, going to church, reading the Bible—all done out of fear of hell—are fruitless. They will just rearrange the selfishness and the pride of their hearts.

If fear of hell won't change the heart, what will? Love. Radical, unconditional love is the only thing that will take our mistrustful, in-denial, conniving little hearts and shock them into a whole new way of living and being**. And where are we going to get that kind of love that changes our heart? Jesus tells us indirectly in our text**. The rich man says, "If my brothers could just see someone raised from the dead then everything would be okay." But as we've noted, Abraham says no to this approach. His refusal to do so should make us think of something**. Didn't Jesus rise from the dead? But is even that enough to believe?** Yes and No! The key is to know why Jesus died!

It was God's will to crush Jesus. The Lord made him a guilt offering, and by the results of his suffering, God is satisfied. You do not know how much Jesus loves you unless you know how much he suffered and how much we are forgiven.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones' gives this illustration “ imagine that a friend comes to see me and says, "Hey, I was at your house the other day and a bill came due. You weren't there, so I paid it." How should I respond? The answer is I have no idea how to respond until I know how big the bill was. Was it just a postage charge? Fifty cents or so? If so, you would say, "Thank you." But what if it was ten years of back taxes? What if it was an enormous debt? As Lloyd-Jones says, "Until I know how much he paid, I don't know whether to shake his hand or fall down on the ground and kiss his feet." Jesus paid our debt to rescue us from ourselves, our sin, and the consequences of our sin. Hell. Eph 5:1-2.