

***REDISCOVER JESUS, PART 62: “THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN
AND LAZARUS”
LUKE 16:19-31
Ps. Jeffrey Susila***

Personal Introduction

Hi everyone. If you don't know me, I'm Jeff - one of the pastors at HMCC of Jakarta. And it's my privilege to be preaching the Word of God for us today.

Sermon Series Introduction

We're currently in Part 62 of our sermon series called "Rediscover Jesus," where we're going through the Gospel of Luke together.

So let's get right into today's sermon about Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus...

Sermon Introduction

Now, have you guys heard of the marshmallow test? It was a study done by Stanford University to test for a child's ability to delay gratification.

So a researcher would place a single marshmallow in front of a kid, and then the researcher would leave the room.

The kid is given 2 options:

- Either eat the marshmallow whenever they'd feel like it.
- Or wait 15 minutes, and they'd get 2 marshmallows.

So how the kids choose to respond in these 15 minutes, would determine what happens afterwards. And when the researcher came back into the room to check, a good number of kids couldn't wait; they'd already eaten their marshmallows.

- Now, they may wish that they could get a re-do so that they can get 2 marshmallows instead, but that opportunity has passed - they only get one chance.

And it's the same with us - we only get one chance here on Earth, and the test that we face is even bigger - because our Lord Jesus Christ will return for a second time. And when he returns, he will judge us according to how we've lived our lives.

So today, we'll take a look at one of Jesus' parables addressing important matters about life and the afterlife...

The One Thing

***How we respond to God's Word in this temporary life
will decide where we spend our eternal afterlife.***

Scripture Introduction

If you have your Bibles with you, please turn to Luke 16:19-31.

For context, at the beginning of the previous chapter, we saw how 2 groups of people gathered to listen to Jesus' teachings:

- One group was the tax collectors and sinners
- And the other group was the Pharisees and Scribes (who were the religious leaders).
 - And these religious leaders were grumbling amongst themselves because they couldn't believe that Jesus was associating himself with sinners.

- And on top of that, they were ridiculing Jesus because of what he was teaching his disciples that you cannot serve God and money - it was ridiculous to them because they were lovers of money...
 - And so last week, we saw how Jesus rebuked the Pharisees - he exposed the Pharisees as those who only justify themselves before men... because they had twisted God's Law only to benefit themselves, but in so doing... they totally missed the heart behind God's Law.

And that's where we're at in today's passage, as Jesus continues to respond to the Pharisees' grumbling and ridicule with another parable...

Scripture Reading

Let's read Luke 16:19-31.

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. 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. 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— 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.'"

This is God's Word.

Overview

- I. The temporary nature of this life (vv.19-22)
- II. The eternal nature of the afterlife (vv.23-26)
- III. The sufficient nature of God's Word (vv.27-31)

Heads-up: I'll briskly go through the 1st point and will spend most of our time in the 2nd point.

I. The temporary nature of this life (vv. 19-22)

Jesus begins his parable by introducing us to two characters:

- There was a rich man... and there was a poor man...
- Two very different characters...

The rich man... wasn't just rich, he was crazy rich - he owned a gated house, and he had the most extravagant clothes (made of fine linen; colored in purple, the most expensive color during those times - and that's because it was so labor-intensive to make this purple dye. The source of the dye comes from the mucus of specific snails from the Mediterranean Sea. And it took thousands of these snails just to make 1 ounce).

- That's why, during those times, the color purple was associated with royalty and wealth - it was very expensive to make.
- And this rich man made it a habit to wear these extravagant clothes, not occasionally, but everyday. And he feasted luxuriously... everyday.
- That's the kind of person he is.
 - What did he do with all of his riches? He enjoyed it all for himself, spending his money for his own enjoyment, comfort, and pleasures... everyday; all the time.

And, on the other side of his house, outside the gate... was a poor man, named Lazarus. Lazarus wasn't just poor, he was deep in poverty and sickness (totally at the opposite end of the spectrum from the rich man).

- He was homeless. So he was probably wearing the same dirty clothes everyday.
- His body wasn't covered in purple, but covered with sores (raw, open wounds).
- He's starving, but couldn't afford food - so he desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table (his scraps).
- And to make matters worse... wild, street dogs came and licked his sores, tormenting him (and I imagine that he wouldn't even have enough energy to try and shoo them away)...
- This was his life... hunger, discomfort, pain... everyday; all the time.

So here, Jesus is highlighting two people, living lives that cannot be more different than one another. One received all these good things, and the other received all these bad things.

And what happens next? Let's look at verse 22 - the poor man died (which we kinda expected)... but then the rich man also died (which is a little unexpected).

- But Jesus is highlighting that they both died.

There's this famous quote: "death is the great equalizer."

- Whether you're rich or poor, whether you own a home or are homeless, dressed extravagantly or simply, eating luxuriously or barely eating... at the end of the day, everyone will eventually die.

Our lives here on Earth are temporary - we're here only for a limited amount of time.

And that end will come relatively quickly because our lives here on Earth are very brief - we're here today, and gone tomorrow.

- And I think we've all felt just how quickly time can pass us by.
 - Just think of this past year - I can't believe it's almost Q4 already! I felt like it was just the beginning of the year.
 - And look at the kids around the church, they've grown up so fast!
 - And for those of us over the age of 30, we probably can't believe that our bodies are already breaking down - it felt like yesterday that we were much younger, and now our bodies are already in decline, not functioning optimally.

Time is passing by so quickly, isn't it? And one day, our bodies will completely stop functioning, we'll die - our lives on Earth are temporary.

And here, Jesus is describing two extreme examples of lives on Earth: extreme comfort and extreme suffering.

- In reality, we may be somewhere in the middle - we experience some sort of comfort to a degree, but then we're also going through some sort of suffering or struggles to some degree.

So then what does this mean for us that our lives on Earth are temporary? Well, this should be both sobering and comforting...

- It's sobering because it reminds us that whatever we possess and experience now... will not last forever.
 - Our worldly riches, wealth, and health will one day end.
- But then it's also comforting because it reminds us that whatever suffering or struggles we currently face, it will also one day end...

"Death is the great equalizer" - it's something we'll all face no matter who we are.

- But there's actually something inaccurate about that famous quote. Because even though everyone will one day die, what happens after death is very much not equal for everyone.
 - And we'll see that for some people, their suffering will not end...

And that's what we'll take a look at next...

II. The eternal nature of the afterlife (vv. 23-26)

When the poor man died, he was carried by the angels to Abraham's side - that's to say, he went to Heaven.

- But then when the rich man died, he didn't go to Heaven... he went to Hades (or Hell), where he was in torment / suffering.

So these two characters went to two completely different places after they died!

- And the Word of God teaches us that when you die, you'll go to one of two places: either you go to Heaven or you go to Hell.
- And these 2 places are very much not equal - in fact, they can't be more opposite than one another (they're on completely 2 different ends of the spectrum).

When we look at Scripture, the Bible (Rev. 21) describes Heaven as:

- A place of eternal joy - where we'll be fully conscious and fully aware of what's happening, as we experience heavenly comfort; no more pain, sorrow, and suffering.
 - Whatever our burdens were on Earth will be no more.
- And we'll also have true riches that will never go away - we'll dwell and enjoy God's presence forever, and we'll be united with Christ in-person.
- And all of God's people will worship God together - as one spiritual family; brothers and sisters in Christ - living in perfect harmony and peace.
 - Imagine that - We'll all be living in Heaven together, living life-on-life together - worshipping God together as we're doing today, except it'll be far more glorious than we can imagine.

I know this is a bit overwhelming to think about, and I know it's kind of difficult for us to imagine all of these good things. It's not easy for me to imagine either. But I think that's the point - I believe Heaven will be far better than anything we can currently imagine! And that's amazing! That's the unimaginable goodness awaiting us in Heaven.

And not only that, but it'll last forever. And I know that that's also difficult for us to imagine because our minds can't fully wrap around the idea of eternity or endless time. But that's Heaven - it's goodness beyond anything we can imagine... for an endless amount of time beyond what we can imagine.

So after Lazarus died, this is where he's now at - he's at a place of eternal joy that's never-ending.

While, on the other hand, the rich man is being tormented in Hell.

Now before I continue, let me just address the elephant in the room. It's not easy for us to think about Hell. And it's not a lot of fun for me to talk about Hell, and it may not be a lot of fun for you guys to listen about Hell too.

- But... here we see that Jesus is talking about Hell. And actually, Jesus spends a lot of his ministry talking about Hell.

- So with that in mind... let's dive in, knowing that Jesus believes that it's very important for us to think about Hell...

The Bible describes Hell as the complete opposite of Heaven:

- It's a place of darkness - A place of God's divine Wrath and judgment (Rev.14:10)
- For in Hell, there will be endless suffering - it's a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 8:12).
- A place of unquenchable fire (Mark 9:48) - where there will be no peace and rest, and where the smoke of torment goes up forever and ever (Rev. 14:11).

And I know that it's also difficult for us to truly imagine the horror of what Hell will be like. But I also think that it'll be far worse than we can imagine. And I think that's the scary thing.

It's difficult for me to imagine "eternal torment." Now I can imagine extreme pain (imagine the most painful experience you've gone through) - I can imagine some kind of extreme physical and mental pain for 5 minutes, but not for eternity. That's not something we often want to think about. But that's the reality as revealed in Scripture.

And this is the torment that the rich man is suffering through; he's in extreme agony in the unquenchable fire of Hell. Hell is painful.

Verses 23-25 then say this:

²³ and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. 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.

An important thing to remember here is that Jesus is telling a parable (a fictional story for the purpose of teaching). So this does not mean that those in Heaven and Hell will be able to communicate with one another.

- But rather, the fictional conversation between the rich man and Abraham is supposed to teach us something.

So in this fictional event that Jesus is describing, as the rich man is being tormented in the fire of Hell, he sees Abraham and Lazarus far off in Heaven, and then he asks Abraham to have mercy on him by sending Lazarus to dip his finger in water to cool off his tongue - so the rich man desires just a short moment of brief comfort from his unending pain and agony.

But this was not possible. Abraham explains why it's not possible - it's because in his lifetime, he's already received his good things, while Lazarus has received his bad things.

- So now, Lazarus (who's received bad things on Earth) is comforted in Heaven, while the rich man (who's already received good things on Earth) is in anguish in Hell.
- What Jesus is highlighting here is justice...
- What he's not saying here is that the poor will go to Heaven, and the rich will go to Hell. That's not the case.
 - Because here we see Abraham in Heaven - and Abraham was a very very wealthy man. He was rich in livestock, silver, and gold.
 - So it's not a matter of the poor going to Heaven and the rich going to Hell.
- But, again, what Jesus is highlighting here is justice.

Because the rich man - who clearly loved and served money (and therefore, didn't truly love and serve God)... he was able to enjoy a life of comfort and extravagance on Earth, when he really should've been punished for his sins against God.

- While, on the other hand, Lazarus - who we can safely assume from this text is a chosen child of God - he's on Earth suffering in poverty and hunger, when he really should be experiencing comfort as one of God's chosen people.
- Jesus is highlighting that there will be justice in the afterlife...
 - Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves before God will be lifted up!

And this would've been so shocking to the Pharisees, as they're listening to this parable!

- Because during those times, people thought that the rich and wealthy were the ones blessed by God.
- And people saw the poor and the sick as cursed (that either they - or their parents - must've sinned against God).
 - But notice how Jesus intentionally named the poor man "Lazarus" (this is unique because Jesus doesn't usually name the characters in his parables). And this is intentional.
 - The name Lazarus means "helped by God" - the people at those times thought that it was the wealthy who were helped by God. Here we see that Jesus is flipping that understanding completely upside down...

This surprising twist would've caused the Pharisees to grumble and ridicule him all the more.

- They'd be thinking, "hold on... is this Jesus saying that we - the religious leaders, who've memorized God's Law and are blessed by God... is Jesus implying that we're the ones headed to Hell?!"

Remember the context from the previous passage, the Pharisees have twisted God's Law - they've missed the heart of God's Law - using it to justify themselves before men, making it seem as if they're holy based on their outward action and appearance (when in reality, on the inside... inside their hearts, they didn't love God, they didn't love others, but they loved themselves, and their status and money).

- God's Law was not meant to be used to make us feel like we're superior to others just because we think we're able to follow it better than some people could.
- But it was meant to show us how far away we actually are from God's Perfect standard - for God's standard is not only obedience but perfect obedience to His Law.
 - To perfectly love God with all of our hearts, mind and soul.
 - And to perfectly love our neighbors as ourselves.
 - Has anyone on Earth done those things perfectly?
 - We've all fallen short of God's perfectly righteous standard.
 - Because sinfully, our tendency is not to love God and others, but to love ourselves - to love our temporary lives on Earth as if it's all there is, and that life is just about enjoying the pleasures that the world has to offer.

Deep in our sinful hearts, we're self-centered...

- And so naturally, we just want to enjoy our lives, and we want to be seen as good people.
 - So even when we sin, we tend to justify ourselves - we're tempted to say that our sins are not too bad (that other people have committed bigger sins or are struggling with their sins more than me).
 - "So I'm not that bad... I don't deserve Hell"
 - And that's why the Pharisees would be upset and offended by Jesus' teaching about Hell.
 - Hell is offensive if you believe that you don't deserve it.

Now, I know of someone - actually Pastor Eric's friend - (who wasn't a Christian at the time), but he tried to not sin for one day. And as hard as he tried, he realized how easy it is for his thoughts to wander away and for him to act and behave in sinful ways). It made him realize that he's a sinner.

Now I have a question for us... why do people continue to sin? If it's so bad, why do we keep sinning? I thought about this, and I think it's because - most of the time - it feels good to sin right? To not think about others, and to enjoy our own pleasures... whatever our personal sins are, they may make us feel good (even if it's temporary), so we keep doing it.

So then, next question: if we actually enjoy sinning, what's the issue with sin?

- Well, look at what's happening in the text...
- Our main issue with sin is that there's a consequence for our sins. An eternal consequence.

Now, we understand that if we break the laws set by our country, we'd face punishment, right? So unlike the concept of eternity, which is difficult for us to imagine, we can actually comprehend the concept of justice - that those who break the law deserve punishment - that would be just and fair.

It's the same case here. Those who break God's Law deserve punishment - which means that those who go to Hell deserve to be there. And since we've all broken God's Law, this means that we all deserve punishment in Hell - it would be just and fair for God to do that - that's what we deserve.

- Now, there's a misconception that people go to Hell because they don't know Jesus. But that's actually not accurate... people go to Hell - not because they don't know Jesus - but because of their sins.
- That's the bad news - that the consequence of our sins is eternal punishment in Hell...

Going back to the parable - we may be thinking, then how is Lazarus in Heaven if everyone - including him - deserves to be in Hell?

- Remember the context of what just happened before this: Jesus just shared parables about the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost sons - from those parables, we learned that God (our gracious and merciful God) is actively looking for His lost people, waiting with open arms for His children to repent and turn back to Him. And that all of Heaven is ready to celebrate when even 1 sinner repents.

That's the Good News - God has not abandoned us though we've abandoned Him. The heart of God's Law is His love. And God loves us so much that He came from Heaven to Earth to save us. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh - fully man, and fully God.

- And this is how he saved us: Jesus lived the perfect life that we could not - fulfilling God's Law perfectly - perfectly loving God and others.
- And when he died on our behalf (as our substitute) on the cross - since he was without sin... he didn't die for his own sins but for ours so that we may be forgiven, and made right in the sight of God.
- And now, those of us who repent of our sins - who turn away from our sins, and turn toward God - those who put their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior... will not be punished in Hell, but will have eternal life in Heaven.
 - That's the Good News - Hell is avoidable!

But there is limited time for repentance! God has graciously given us time to repent during our lifetime on Earth. But after we die, there is no re-do (just like the marshmallow test, we only get one chance). When we die, it will be the time for our lives to be judged...

And how we respond to God's Word in this temporary life will decide where we spend our eternal afterlife - will it be Heaven or Hell?

- Will God's Word lead us to repent?
- Or will we use it to justify ourselves before others?
- Or perhaps some of us choose to not think about God's Word or the afterlife.

But Jesus clearly wants us to think about these things!

- To think about the eternal consequence of our sins - because we're on Earth only temporarily but we'll either be in Heaven or Hell for eternity.

And that eternal nature of the afterlife is highlighted next in v.26...

Abraham gives a second reason to the rich man on why it would be impossible for him to send Lazarus to him. And that's because a great chasm has been fixed by God between Heaven and Hell - so that no one can pass from Heaven to Hell, and from Hell to Heaven.

This highlights that Heaven and Hell will be eternally separated.

- Those in Heaven will remain in heaven forever.
- And those in Hell will remain there forever.
- There is no in-between, and there is no purgatory where one can crossover to Heaven. There is no crossing over.
 - In the afterlife, you'll be in either one of two places: Heaven or Hell.
 - And Hell is painful, it's deserved...
 - And it's eternal...

But through repentance, it's also avoidable... and we'll see that idea highlighted further as we dive into...

III. The sufficient nature of God's Word (vv. 27-31)

Verses 27-28 say this:

²⁷ And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— ²⁸ for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.'

As the rich man understands the reality of his eternal torment in Hell.. he remembers his family on Earth, and he's thinking "I don't want my family to suffer the same fate as me. Send Lazarus to warn my family so that they don't suffer in Hell!"

I can understand where this rich man is coming from. To help us better understand what this rich man - or someone in Hell - may be feeling... I feel like it may be helpful for me to read the lyrics of a song called "Letter from the Grave" by Shai Linne...

"I'm in agony in this fire
 Please, can I - can I just warn my family, please?
 Can I just warn my family?
 Just let me go back!
 If I can't go back, let me write them a letter or let me dictate it!
 I'll dictate it, please!
 Just write this down for me, please!

To my parent, my sisters, my cousins, my nieces
 Friend, co-workers- everybody needs to read this
 You probably thinking I'm in heaven smiling down upon you
 But that's not true - I'm writing this now to warn you...

... Your pride will be killed - the God of the Bible is real
 Y'all know - I ain't read the Bible a day in my life
 But He's the one who's inflicting all my pain and my strife
 So get a Bible and read it - whatever you read - believe it
 After believing, eat it, sleep it, and breathe it
 There's much more to this man Jesus - observe the story
 And I can tell you that there's no such thing as purgatory
 What I wouldn't give to have your opportunity
 I see my pride has ruined me, ignoring God is lunacy"

This is what the rich man - or someone in Hell - may be thinking...

Verses 29-31 then say this:

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.'"

"Moses and the Prophets" refer to what we now know as Old Testament Scriptures. But during that time before the New Testament was written, it was just known as Scripture - the Word of God.

So Abraham explains that the rich man's brothers already have God's Word to teach them all that they need to know about torment in hell, and about repentance.

- But this rich man believes that Scripture would not be enough to convince his brothers of their sins so that they'd repent. But that they'd definitely believe if someone were to resurrect from the dead to warn them.

But what Abraham is basically saying is this: God's Word is enough; It's sufficient to convince us of our sins and save us from eternal torment in Hell.

- Because if you try to follow the Laws perfectly, you'll see the heart behind God's Law, and you'll see how impossible it is to obey it perfectly. It'll point you to your sins, and your need for a Savior.
- And "Moses and the Prophets" (Old Testament Scripture) points to a coming Messiah who would save first the Jews and then the Gentiles.

God's Word is sufficient - it's all we need.

But by God's design, there was actually an actual man - a friend of Jesus - who was also named Lazarus. And he died, but was actually resurrected by Jesus. So in history, a man named Lazarus was actually resurrected from the dead...

But when the Pharisees heard of this news, how did they respond? They still didn't believe in what Jesus was saying and teaching. Resurrection was not enough for them. And that's because they've completely missed the heart of God's Law - so then "neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead."

Instead, they plot to kill Lazarus because his miraculous resurrection supported the work of Jesus, whom they despised. So they wanted to get rid of the evidence that's leading people to believe in Jesus.

And they ended up leading the charge to also kill Jesus himself, and they succeeded. Jesus was crucified and died. And in three days, Jesus himself resurrected and revealed himself to the apostles and to hundreds of other believers (this was recorded in the New Testament).

- The religious leaders still did not believe in Jesus' resurrection, and ended up persecuting and killing Christians.
- They arrested the apostles multiple times, asking them to stop spreading the teachings of Jesus.
 - But the apostles refused. And hundreds of Christians refused, and so they were tortured and died because of their faith.
 - Now, why would hundreds of people be willing to be tortured for Jesus?
 - If someone said they were God, but they were killed and then nothing happened, you'd expect their followers to scatter and move on, let alone be tortured for a meaningless cause.
 - So then why were hundreds of Christians willing to go through torture and persecution? Because they were first-hand witnesses to the life of Jesus - who he is, and what he did. And they saw the resurrected with their own eyes. How can they continue living as if he didn't resurrect?
 - Jesus' resurrection completely changes everything!
 - Because if Jesus truly resurrected, then everything Jesus says that will happen is true (just as he said that he will die and be resurrected).
 - And that means that what Jesus says about this life is also true - this life is not all there is. There is an afterlife - there is a Heaven and there is a Hell. And the first Christians lived their lives holding onto their faith with steadfastness for they know that their salvation and eternal life is real and truly secured in Christ.

And some of these Christians - inspired by the Holy Spirit - recorded their first-hand encounter with Jesus, so that we may believe in Jesus Christ - the one who is fully man and fully God - who died for our sins - and resurrected, defeating death.

- And all of us who put our faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will be united in him - and will live joyfully and peacefully for all eternity in Heaven in the presence of God, living life-on-life with Jesus himself, along with our brothers and sisters as one spiritual family.
- That's the Good News of Jesus Christ - through our faith in him, we are saved.

Now, have you personally responded to the Good News of Jesus Christ?

- Teens - if your parents are Christians, this does not guarantee that you'll go to Heaven.
 - Like the rich man, calling Abraham "father Abraham" which points to his Jewish ancestry and family background, but that didn't save him.
 - And that's because we each need to respond to God's Word personally on our own.
 - If you - or anyone else here - have not yet put their faith in Christ, or you're not completely sure about it right now, that's ok (for now)! But don't stop there. I encourage you to keep going, and wrestle through this!
 - The Christian faith is not blind faith - where you don't know who you're placing your faith in, where you're not sure what's going to happen.
 - The Christian faith is not blind faith - we know who we're putting our faith in, and we know what's going to happen because God's Word is very clear about these things.
 - So it's ok to take time to wrestle through these things. You should.
 - So if you have questions about the validity and authenticity of the Bible, or if you have questions about Jesus and his teachings, talk to your parents, talk to your Christian friends, talk to the pastors.
 - Please don't just brush this aside, living as if it doesn't exist.
 - Because the consequence of this is your eternal life. So if there's one thing in the world that you'd want to be sure of, it's this.

And believing in Christ is so much more than just escaping Hell... it's so much more...

- Perhaps our introduction to Christianity is because of this thought "I don't want to go to Hell" (which is a great start), but I hope we don't stop there...
 - Because... "Who is this God, who rescued me from Hell?"
- Following Jesus is not merely about escaping Hell, but it's also about a deep and intimate relationship with God.
- And the more that relationship is built, the more you get to know God personally and the your confidence in the Gospel will grow (just like how the first Christians were so steadfast in their faith because of their personal relationship with Christ).

Again, I encourage you, wrestle through your belief and unbelief, and if you're struggling... pray, "God, I'm honestly not sure what to believe, but please help me with my unbelief."

And I also encourage you to check out a couple of books that are available in our church's digital library:

- "Is Hell Real?" by Dane C. Ortlund
- "Why Trust the Bible?" by Greg Gilbert

Now for those of us who have put our faith in Jesus Christ, we know that Jesus is the only way, the truth, and the life.

So let's ask ourselves: would our lives be different if we truly believed God's Word?

- This is where the lessons from Chp.15-16 will come together...
 - Because then we'd live as if this world is not all there is. For there is an eternal afterlife.
 - That should affect how we manage the money God has entrusted to us.
 - It should affect how we live out the heart of God's Law - loving Him and loving others.
 - And it should affect our evangelism efforts - because if we truly believe what Jesus says about Hell then why are we not telling more people how to escape Hell? How to go to Heaven? How to have a deep and personal relationship with our God?

Let's respond (and help others respond) to God's Word in this temporary life because it will decide where we spend our eternal afterlife.

To help us with our next steps, here are 3 life applications...

Life Application

1. Respond to God's Word.

- God's Word is sufficient to convince us of our sins. So have we repented of our sins and turned to Christ for the forgiveness of our sins and the assurance of our salvation?
- Perhaps we need to respond to God's Word for the first time in our lives.
 - If you already have, then perhaps we need to respond to God's Word daily.

2. Live out God's Word.

- Evidence of someone who has true, genuine faith in Christ can be seen through the way they live their lives.
 - If someone were to observe your past week, would they say that you're a God-fearing / God-honoring person?
 - The Gospel is not only to be believed, but to be lived out.

3. Share God's Word.

- Share God's Word by allowing others to observe you as you live out your faith.
- And not only that, but also share your faith with others verbally, pointing them to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the living Word of God.

The One Thing

***How we respond to God's Word in this temporary life
will decide where we spend our eternal afterlife.***