

Introduction:

1. I remember when I got a new phone. The instructions that came with the phone recommended backing up the contact list periodically. I ignored the instructions because I assumed I would have plenty of time to do it later. Two months later I learned too late that I should have backed up my information. I lost all of my contacts that were in my phone. We all have learned lessons too late from experiences like this. Life has a way of teaching us valuable lessons. It is often the lessons that we learn the hard way that usually stick with us the most.
2. However, there are lessons that we can learn too late that will define our position in eternity. I know that because there's a man in the Bible that learned some lessons too late. The lessons that he learned are going to be lessons that all of us will learn. The question is whether or not we will learn them now, or before it's too late. Let's find out what these lessons are.

The Lesson:

I. Death is real (Luke 16:19-22).

- A. The rich man may have denied the reality of death.
 1. This rich man was living a life that so many Americans live. He enjoyed the good things that life had to offer. He was rich. He was a great dresser. He lived in luxury. If he was living now he may have had his picture in People magazine. He had all of these luxuries, but all of his possessions may have been blinding him to the reality of death. What I mean by that is that there's no question that he understood that he would die, but maybe not as soon as he thought.
 2. He now knows that death is real. This is a lesson that we need to learn now.
- B. All of us will die one day.
 1. We need to accept the fact that death one day will take us. This is why we don't like to talk about death. We don't like to hear sermons about this subject, because it forces us to confront our own mortality. It makes us feel uncomfortable. We live in a fantasy world that doesn't want to deal with this reality. We are a death denying culture. Our society does everything possible not to age. We buy cosmetic products, have surgeries, we take pills and shots, all to delay the aging process and eventually death.
 2. We see others die, but we will tell ourselves that death will never come to me, at least not right now.
 - a. The Georgian Olympian luger Nodar Kumaritashvili was 21 years old when he died during a practice run for his event. He probably thought he would be standing on the medal stand in a few days.
 - b. The colleagues of Amy Bishop, the college professor in Alabama who were killed at point blank range while in a meeting, probably thought that they would be grading papers later on that day.
 - c. The people that worked at the IRS building in Austin Texas probably were thinking about what they would be doing later on that day.
 3. What does it usually take for us to talk about death? It usually takes something dramatic. When we get the verdict from our doctor on some test result. When we hear of a love one that has died. However, God has made it clear that this is a reality that we all need to know (Hebrews 9:27). James tells us that our lives are like a vapor, and we don't know when we will die (James 4:13-15).
 4. Death does not discriminate. Death doesn't care if you are rich or poor, male or female, young or old (Genesis 5:5-8).
 5. Death is real. We can't outrun it, and we can't ignore it. How about us? Will death be a lesson that we learn too late?

II. The soul is real (Luke 16:23-26)

- A. Did the rich man know he had a soul?
 1. I don't know the answer to that question. But what I do know is that this man now understands that he does. He knows that everyone has a soul.

2. When the rich man opened up his eyes, he realized that he was conscious and aware of his surroundings. He learned that he had a soul and was still alive. He had to experience this to learn it. But when he experienced this he was not ready for what he would learn. This is why we need to learn this lesson now.
- B. We need to learn that death is not the end but is only the beginning.
1. One of the oldest questions that man has ever pondered is what happens the first moment after death? The Bible gives us the answer: every person will immediately realize that they have a soul that continues to live.
 2. Jesus taught that man is more than flesh and bones (Mark 8:36-37). He taught that man has a soul. Our soul is more valuable than anything we could ever get in this world. Notice what Jesus said in Matthew 10:28. We have a part of us that will continue to live on after we die forever. Paul mentions the same thing in his letter to Corinth (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).
 3. Now while this is true, there are many that would like to tell you otherwise. The college professors will attempt to sway their students with their false doctrine of evolution and materialism because they don't believe the Bible. Just because they can't prove the existence of a soul through some laboratory experiment, doesn't mean that we don't have one. We can know that we have one because that's what the Bible teaches. One day these professors will know. But it will be too late.
 4. There are even religious people that don't believe this. The Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists reject the idea of man's soul living after death. They believe this because they don't follow God's word, but the words of man. Will we learn this lesson too before it's too late?

III. Hell is real (Luke 16:23-25).

- A. The rich man learned where he will spend eternity.
1. When this man opened up his eyes he knew he was in a place of torment. There was no rest for this man. Unlike Lazarus, there was no comfort or peace for this man.
 2. He learned that hell is real, but he learned it too late. He now knows where his soul is going to spend eternity. He begged for mercy, but did not receive it (Luke 16:23-24). As we sit in these pews at this very moment this man is still begging for mercy.
- B. Jesus wants us to know that hell is real before it is too late.
1. When people hear about the idea of a place of eternal suffering, many are quick to scoff at the Bible and this place called hell. Men like Bill Maher and Richard Dawkins scoff at God and ridicule the Bible and say that this is just a made up story. But when we understand that the Bible is the Word of God, then we can know for a fact that what we have here is true.
 2. If we are not prepared when we die, it will be our final destination for eternity. When we die, all of us are going to go to an intermediate place until the final judgment day. Most people will be with the rich man suffering, and others will be in a state of comfort with Lazarus. While this intermediate place is temporary, wherever we open our eyes, we will know where we will spend eternity.
 3. Hell will be a place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30). It will be a place where suffering will never end (Mark 9:48). Hell will be a place for the unprepared. It will be a place of eternity without the mercy of God. God gives men on this side of life the chance to get right with Him. But when we die, we no longer have the opportunity to embrace the mercy of God.
 4. Why will hell be so bad? It will be bad because we will be separated from the benefits of God's presence (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). No man has gone a day without enjoying the benefits of God's presence (Matthew 5:45). But even worse than that, it will be bad because this torment and punishment will last forever.

Conclusion:

1. If you learn these lessons now, you can live and die with confidence and trust in God.
2. If you learn them too late, you will carry this regret for eternity.