“Hell Is For Real”

Matthew 25:3-46

There are plenty of great topics to consider from Scripture when it comes to growing in our knowledge of the truth. But sometimes some of the great topics are truly not pleasant ones. This is true of today’s sermon. Please open your Bible with me to Mark chapter nine.

I’m sure you’ve read about and probably listened to sermons about Hell. So, what I am about to share may not be new to you. But, in the course of any study of God’s word, you will come upon this subject. Next Sunday I intend to say something to you about Heaven. Today, though, if I am to be true to you and true to the LORD and true to His Word, I will tell you some simple, yet important things about Hell.

For sure, it’s an unattractive subject. The reality is this: Hell is a real place. Hell, as you will see, is fire. It’s a world where people exist under divine judgment. It’s a place that was originally prepared for Satan and those angels who followed him. It is truly an unpleasant, but necessary subject.

Now, given what you already know about Hell, I’d like to turn your attention to just what the LORD has told us in His Word.

Please look with me at the Gospel of Mark at chapter nine and verse thirty-eight.

Mark 9:38 *“And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils [demons] in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. (39) But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. (40) For he that is not against us is on our part.*

*(41) For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. (42) And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.*

*(43) And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: (44) Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. (45) And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt [lame] into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:*

*(46) Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. (47) And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: (48) Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”*

I’ve titled today’s sermon “Hell Is For Real.” Shall we pray?

First and foremost, how would anyone know that Hell is a real place? There are at least two answers to this question. One, the Bible doesn’t mince any words as to its horrors and its inhabitants and its purpose. The topic is referred some fifty-four times throughout the Bible. And the second answer is this. Try to imagine, if you can, that there is no such place.

Now, if there is no Hell, then all of the following must be true.

One, the Bible is wrong.

Two, ultimate justice will not take place.

Three, there is no need for Jesus Christ to have died on the Cross.

But, folks, as you are about to see, the Bible is trust-worthy. It is totally reliable in every single thing it says. As sure as there is a God, there is ultimate justice. And, since Heal is for real, there is a need for Jesus Christ and His Cross.

The words I read for you today are the words of the LORD of Heaven and Earth; Jesus Christ. And, as I proceed today, please remember this. We have no greater authority on which to base a belief in Hell than on the voice of the Son of God. What *He* says is eternally true. And what *He* says always carries with it the power of truth and Heaven itself. Jesus can certainly speak to every heart here today on this subject far better than I ever could.

Folks, Hell is a real place. Hell is not an imaginary place. It’s not a symbol that we can use to discover truth with. It’s real.

Now, what is the truth about Hell?

The best way to answer this question is by asking this question. How does Jesus describe it? Here are the terms He uses. First, it’s a place that is entered by choice. Folks, the key to understanding Hell is what you insist on holding on to. Hell is not the default place for people who have somehow never heard about God or Christ.

Look again at the words of Jesus. And notice that He does use some figurative language here. But look at, for example, verse forty-three. Mark 9:43 *“And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell,…”* Now look at verse forty-five. Mark 9:45 *“And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell…”* And look further at verse forty-seven. Mark 9:47 *“And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:…”*

Verse forty-three again “If your hand offends you.” This term “offend” is a 17th century, Old English word meaning “to draw to evil,” and “to cause to sin.”

If your hand becomes a means for you to be led into sin, cut it off. If your foot becomes a means for you to be led into sin, cut it off. If your eye becomes a means for you to be led into sin, pluck it out.

Whenever you make the choice to use your hands or your feet or your eyes to engage in sin, you are using the specific parts of your body that God intended for you to use to serve Him. And using them to sin is so serious that you’ve be far better to lose a hand or a foot or an eye and enter into the glories of Heaven than to have both and be thrown into hell.

Now, we all know that the hand is used for whatever you *choose* to use it for. The same holds true for your foot. You *choose* to go somewhere while your foot just goes where you tell it to go. And the same holds true for your eyes. With your hand you do something. Your feet take you places. And your eyes see what you *choose* for them to see. And, says Jesus, if you allow your hand or your foot or your eye to be used to do evil, “cut it off.” In today’s words we’d say.
Do something drastic about it.” Why? As Jesus teaches here, a person enters Hell by choice.

Now, some of you use your hands to help people. You might use those same hands to create and to illustrate something. You might also use your hands to and to heal. But some use their hands to hurt and to wound and to kill and to steal. The same holds true for your feet. Your feet will only go where you choose to go. And the same holds true for your eye. You will only look at what you choose to look at.

But, the LORD’s words are deeper than that, aren’t they?

Some will hold on to pride. Some will hold on to resentment. Others will hold on to an unforgiving spirit. For some it will be immorality. Some will even hold on to their money rather than yield their lives to Christ. Whatever it is, each person who ends up in Hell has made his own choice as to what he or she will hold on to in the end.

So, the first word from Jesus is this “Hell is entered by choice.”

Hell is a real place. It’s as real as the use of your hand right now. If you choose to, you can use your hand to take someone’s life or you can choose to help someone in need. So the place called Hell is the place of punishment for your sins.

Think about the broader picture here. God created a sinless world and placed two sinless people into it. So, obviously there was no need for a place of judgment in the beginning. But once man chose with his eye, stepped toward the tree with his foot and reached with his hand, there had to be both justice and judgment.

God’s warning to Adam was simple. “If you eat of this fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, you will surely die.” Judgment is simply the best answer to our disobed-ience. And, having created human beings with a spirit, a soul, and a body, the LORD now had to, in love and wisdom; create a place for those who chose sin over obedience.

Folks, Hell is the place where punishment will be meted out to those who choose to use their minds and bodies for things other than what is pleasing to Him.

Now, someone will say, “Well, wasn’t Hell created for the devil and his angels?” And the answer is “Yes.” But the exact same thing applies. Hell is the place of ultimate justice and the punishment of evil and wrong and sin. Satan chose his own will over God’s will. And still to this day he wants sinners to stay in his kingdom and reject the LORD.

Practically speaking, we all know that we are sinners by nature, by choice, and by habit. But, at the same time, we all have an aversion to the thought that our sins won’t be judged. If anything, we spend our lives wishing and hoping there was no such place as Hell.

First, then, according to Jesus, a person enters the confines of Hell by choice.

Second, Hell consists of an eternally burning fire. Look again at the LORD’s words in verse forty-three. Mark 9:43 *“And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:…” And the LORD repeats this exact same phrase three times here. Look at verse forty-five. (45) “And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:”*

And then again in verse forty-eight The LORD says this. Mark 9:48 *“into the fire that never shall be quenched.”* Yet someone might say, “But can’t the LORD quench that fire?” Yes, He could. But why would He? Those who end up in Hell will, given the choice again, still not choose the LORD’s way for themselves. They’d still hold on to their own ways.

Let me prove this to you. Hold your place here and go with me to the story of a man who did end up in Hell. His story is found in the Gospel of Luke chapter sixteen. Look with me at verse twenty-seven. Luke 16:27 *“Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: (28) For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. (29) Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.*

*(30) And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. (31) And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”*

Now, what does this man really want? He wants for his brothers to not end up here. But does he himself want to escape his punishment? Not at all. The man even asks for water to cool is tongue, verse twenty-four. But he never asks to be delivered from his torment. Why? The reason is because he will not give up what he had chosen in life. He’s still choosing it in death. He’s still choosing it in Hell.

Folks, you can easily see how and why Hell must be a fire that shall never be quenched. It’s because even in Hell men and women will still want their own way and not God’s way. And the same holds true for Satan and his angels.

First, Hell is a choice.

Second, Hell consists of an eternally burning fire.

Now third, Hell is a place of torment. Look back with me at the words of Jesus in Mark nine. Here’s what we read in verse forty-four Mark 9:44 *“…where the worm dieth not…”*

And Jesus repeats this phrase in verse forty-six and in verse forty-eight. The “worm,” folks, is not the earthworm that you have in your garden. It’s another word for a very ugly worm, a “maggot,” the worm that destroys the dead carcass of an animal. The worm is the worm of eternal torment. Please don’t be so foolish as to imagine that there are literal worms in Hell. The worm here is the LORD’s word picture to get you to see the steady, unending torment inside the mind and soul of a person who has refused the right way and is now spending eternity in Hell.

Now, it is true that when we are placed in our graves, the worms eat our physical bodies. But the LORD says that Hell is the place “where the worm dieth not.” The one thing that makes hell its own justice and judgment is this horrible fact. In Hell, there is torment in a man’s soul.

And to further describe how horrible Hell really is, Jesus warns us that it is an eternal fire. Hell, Look again at verse forty-three. Mark 9:43 *“And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:…”*

And He repeats this line again and again. Verse forty-four, and then again in verse forty-five and verse forty-six and then again in forty-eight. *“Where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.”*

Both the undying maggot and the unquenchable fire are two very, very vivid pictures. Jesus knows how to drive home a point. They convey one clear message to us about Hell. Hell is a place of torment.

Everyone everywhere knows that the last thing anyone wants to happen to them is that they be physically burned. Fire isn’t just a word picture, though. It’s a fire that no one can put out. The word here is “unquenchable.” And the implication is that whoever spends eternity in Hell will be tormented in the flames of Hell forever and ever.

Folks, that’s the truth about the fire of Hell. When it comes to Jesus, He wants you to know the truth because He knows the power of the truth. He knows that the truth can set you free. He knows that truth is a very clear warning signal. So, His goal here is this. He wants no one to enter into Hell. He is not willing that anyone perish. So, He simply tells the truth about Hell and His words are absolutely convincing and convicting. These are the words of the Son of God.

First, Hell is a choice.

Second, Hell consists of an eternally burning fire.

Third, Hell is a place of torment.

Now, knowing the truth about Hell, in and of itself, is a way to reach a man’s heart. You see, anyone can plainly see that Hell is vital to Truth, to Ultimate Justice, and to the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Life itself makes no sense if, in the end, there is no such place.

But how many here today are aware of the truth about Hell? You may be here and have only for the first time in your life heard and understood what Hell really it. And it’s by no means a pleasant subject. But the truth, as you know, is not always pretty.

What all this comes down to is you and your decision today. The Bible clearly spells out the following facts: One, you are a sinner by nature, by choice, and by habit. Two, there are wages for your sins. The wages for sin is death. And three, the answer to sin and death and Hell is a Man named Jesus Christ.

Why else would the Christ of Heaven come to this earth if it wasn’t warranted? The LORD came here to be the Answer for sin, death, *and* Hell. He became a man in order to become your Substitute. He never once sinned. Yet, He became sin for you. And, at the moment you trust in His work on the Cross, you have your condemnation removed. You become righteous, Hell is not your destiny, and you gain eternal life.

What other reason could the LORD of Glory have for coming into this sinful world of ours? His reason was a large one. He came to remove you and me from the prospect of an eternal Hell and secure your place in Heaven. Hallelujah!

You see, the LORD took all of your sins upon His sinless back and became sin for you. Then, He died. There on the Cross Jesus took the penalty for all your sins. You had been sentenced to Hell for your sins. Jesus took your place and paid your Sentence.

Now, my last word on the subject of Hell is found in the words of Mark nine verse forty-seven. Mark 9:47 *“And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:…”*

Jesus offers everyone a choice. Notice He says *“it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye,…”* He wants people to enter His Kingdom.

The LORD knows how difficult it is to give up whatever it is that you are holding on to. He knows that men and women will often cling to that one thing which they will not relinquish even on the pain of death. What is it you are holding on to? Your good works? Your Church attendance? Your hope that He’ll have mercy on you in the end? Your pride? Or, which sin (one of the Ten Commandments) are you unwilling to repent of? Have you seen yourself in the Light of the Ten Commandments? These ten laws were given so that you might see yourself as you truly are; a sinner. Then, if you admit that you are a sinner, then you know you are in need of God’s free salvation. All your sins are are a breaking of God’s commands. And the person who sees himself as justly condemned for his sins is the only candidate who will truly believe the Gospel of Grace.

Hell, according to the Bible, is a real place. But it’s a place no one can possibly imagine apart from the words of the Scriptures.

Now, folks, everyone who believes in Heaven hopes to go there some day. And, as well, everyone who believes in Hell, hopes they will *not* go there when they die. But, according to Jesus, only the righteous can and will enter Heaven. Only those who refuse the free gift of eternal life will enter the gates of Hell. So, which will it be for you?

Salvation is by grace alone, through faith. And that, not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The truth *will* set you free. But, you must repent. You must give up whatever it is that is holding you away from His free gift of salvation. If not, you and no one except you, has made the choice to spend eternity in Hell.

Admit you are a sinner and deserving of God’s judgment? Then, admit your need for God’s grace to save your soul today?

Today is the Day of Salvation. Today is the day you must make your decision. In order to be saved, here’s what you must do. Repent and believe.

* To repent means to change your mind about God, Christ, your sin, and God’s free gift of salvation.
* To believe means to simply trust Jesus Christ alone as the One Who paid the entire penalty for your sins.

Will you repent and believe today? *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

Here’s a simple, but wonderful prayer that is yours to pray. *“Father, I realize I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus died in my place on the cross. I repent of my sins. I want to be completely forgiven today. I am trusting you right now to save me. Thank you. Amen”*

Extend invitation.

Hymn # \_\_\_\_\_ “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”