

# What Will Your Obituary Say?

Luke 16:19-31

Pastor Jim Rademaker  
HOPE Lutheran Brethren Church

Every person in history has at least one thing in common; they have all died. No human being has ever escaped death. We hear of people dying every day, either on TV, in the newspaper, or by word of mouth.

Someday, you'll be reading the paper and read that someone you knew died. Maybe it will be a friend, a father, a mother a brother or sister, your next door neighbor. Someday, someone will be reading the paper and *your name* will be there. Do you ever wonder what they will say about you?

*"Dave was a good father. He worked in the medical field for 40 years."*

*"Betty was a wonderful mother who raised six children and was always active in her church."*

*"John was fun to be around. He always loved to help others."*

Today we read the obituaries of two men. What were they like? What did people say about them? Looking back over their lives, what did people finally remember?

The obituary of the one man simply read, "**He was rich.**" There was no better way of describing him. An obituary usually tries to sum up the life of a person, the main things people remember about him or her. The number one thing people remembered about this guy was that he had a lot of money.

What about the second obituary? It said, "**A local bum was carried away by angels where he found eternal riches!**" The few people that knew of him called him *Lazarus*. Most people drove by him or passed him on the street. But few ever cared to even ask his name. He looked kind of rough. You know, the kind of guy you try and keep your distance from.

The rich man lived a good life. He had a beautiful new home. He drove a large SUV. Not by choice, of course. He needed it in order

to pull his boat, a pair of four-wheelers, and two jet skies. He spent most of his weekends at his cabin up North. He even had season tickets to all the Packer games. He enjoyed living the American Dream.

The poor man lived at the local emergency shelter. He never really made it in life. The American Dream had somehow eluded him. Every day was a struggle just to survive. No gas money to go up North.

And like all people, the two eventually died. And what they experienced next was not at all what they had expected!

Maybe that's happened to you. You're arrived somewhere and it wasn't at all like what you expected. The first time I traveled to the Eastern U.S. I expected to find nothing but building upon building, city everywhere. Yet when I arrived, I was shocked to see nothing but trees everywhere! It wasn't at all what I had expected.

The rich man arrived somewhere, and it wasn't at all what he expected either! Like everybody else, when he died, he expected to go to heaven. "After all", he thought, "isn't that where everyone ends up? Don't all roads lead to the same place?" And if there was a hell, which he had doubted, it wouldn't be so bad. He used to joke that he would see all of his old buddies there and it would be one big party.

He and his friends couldn't have been more wrong! *This* wasn't at all what he had expected. He didn't find anything funny about hell. As a matter of fact, he wouldn't have wished this place on his worst enemy!

*And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame!"*

But it was too late!

*"Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.*

*And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us."*

There are things in life we wish we could do over, but we can't. It's too late. There's no going back.

Jesus put it like this ...

*The kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep.*

*But at midnight there was a shout, "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him." Then all those virgins rose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the prudent, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." But the prudent answered, saying, "No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves."*

*And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast - and the door was shut!*

*And later the other virgins also came, saying, "Lord, lord, open up for us." But he answered and said, "Truly I say to you, I do not know you." Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.*  
(Matthew 25:1-13)

At the end of *your* life, the door will be shut FOREVER. You will be dying to get in. You will beg to get in. But all your pleading will fall on deaf ears. It will be too late. You may think that you have all the time in the world. But none of us really has any idea what even the next second will bring.

*"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. (James 4:13-14)*

Most of us live like we have all the time in the world. Who thinks about their own obituary? Yet accidents happen every day. Cancer cells could be growing as we speak. A small, undetected mass could be lying dormant. You could be hit from behind as you innocently wait to make a left turn. It's all over in the blink of an eye. These things happen everyday and no one is expecting it's going to happen to *them*.

Today you could be like the rich man, never expecting that *your* name would appear in the tomorrow's obituary column. Today might be *your* day. Are you ready?

Maybe, like the rich man, you're just minding your own business. Trying to get through the day and not thinking a whole lot about tomorrow or obituaries or cancer or left turns. Like the rich man, you're trying to live the American Dream as best you know how.

*"But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.*

Is it wrong to enjoy good things? Absolutely not! God wants you to enjoy the gifts He's given. But if that's all you're living for, you're in for a rude awakening! If His *gifts* become your *gods*, you had better listen up. Today, you may be just like the rich man Jesus spoke of or you may not. But all of us are like the five brothers.

*And [the rich man] said, "Then I beg you, Father, that you send him to my father's house - for I have five brothers - that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment." But Abraham said, "They have Moses and the Prophets [the Scriptures]; let them hear them."*

*But he said, "No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!" But he said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone*

*rises from the dead."*

Today, you're one of the five brothers. For the rich man, it was too late. His place in eternity had been set. There was no turning back or starting over. But for you, there's still time. How much time? Nobody knows. Maybe years. Maybe weeks. Maybe only hours.

But there's still *a little time* for you to be saved from something you're not prepared to face. There's no party. There are no good times with buddies down there. There's only a place of unending torment and agony. That's what's waiting to greet you on the other side.

But thank God, you still have *a little time* to hear what Moses and the Prophets have to say. You still have *a little time* to get out your Bible, to go to church, to talk with a pastor or a friend and hear what God has to say to you. If all you're doing is pursuing the American Dream, one day you're going to find yourself living a nightmare you never dreamed of.

There aren't too many guarantees in life. They say my money is guaranteed by the FDIC up to \$100,000. Midas will guarantee your muffler for the life of your car. But there is one guarantee we all have. One day we're all going to die. And at that moment we will meet God, whether we're ready for Him or not. There will be no second changes. No going back and doing things over again.

Someday an obituary will be written about you. What will it say? What will people remember about you? More importantly, what will God say about you?

*"\_\_\_\_\_ died today. He/she did a lot of good things and was loved by many. But He never cared much for the Bible. He was always too busy living the American Dream, enjoying the gifts God had given him, that he never gave much thought to God or his standing before God or what He had to say. He figured he already knew everything he needed to know. Being so wrapped up in his own little world, he never thought about the next. After all, he had never murdered anyone. What was there to worry about?"*

If that's the obituary God writes about you, then one of these days *you* will lift up your eyes in hell, being in great torment. And you will cry out, *"Have mercy on me, for I am in agony in this flame!!!"*

What will be the response? *"Remember, that during your life you received your good things ... And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and you will not be able to cross over to us."*

Listen to God speak to you now, before it's too late. Believe Him when He tells you with a broken heart that you are hopelessly condemned to hell because of your sin. But also believe that He loves you more than you'll ever know, and He would give anything to rescue you from the fate of the rich man.

And He did. He gave everything. When Jesus willingly volunteered to take your place on the cross, He went to hell for you. He suffered for you. God died for you.

*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:10)*

Someday God will write an obituary about you. What will He write? If you believe that Jesus died for you, He will write:

*"\_\_\_\_\_ died today, and was carried away by angels to be with Jesus forever! In life, she wasn't well known by the "in crowd", but she was well known by her Heavenly Father. She gave up pursuing the American Dream, and pursued Another instead. She stopped worrying about the things of this world, and learned to trust herself into His nail-pierced hands. She knew where she was going, not because she hadn't murdered anyone, but because God allowed Himself to be murdered on her behalf.*

This might be *your* year. Today could be *your* day. Are you ready? Make sure you know for sure before your head hits the pillow tonight. Don't wait for lightning to strike. Don't wait for some great sign to drop out of heaven. Don't wait for someone to rise from the dead. By then it'll be too late.

If you know Jesus and where you're going, the angels in heaven are throwing a party! Rejoice with them. But don't forget to tell others what God has done for them. *Tomorrow* might be too late.