

INI Hymns:

Sermon 26-24

4th Sunday after Easter **Matthew 25:41**

5/3/26

Dear Father, grant us ears to hear, a mind to understand, and a heart to believe everything you say.
In Jesus name, Amen.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

39% — According to the Angus Reid Institute's 2024 poll, that is the number of confessing Christians in Canada who definitely believe that there is life after death. 39%, that corresponds to the 37% of Christians in Canada I told you about a couple of weeks ago who believe that Jesus actually rose from the dead. What does that tell you about Christianity in Canada? The vast majority of Christians, over 60% do not believe the Bible. The Bible clearly teaches life after death in either heaven or in hell. Most Christians don't believe it. No wonder Jesus said, "When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:8. Of those 39% who do believe in life after death, many of them believe in heaven but not in a literal hell.

A little over a month ago professor Pfeiffer had an excellent chapel talk about how

It's Important to Keep Hell Real.

The text he used was from Matthew 25:41, which is from Jesus' description of Judgment day. He tells us what will happen when Christ returns. He will come again and raise all the dead and will divide everyone, with Christ believers on His right and Christ rejectors on His left.

"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"

That is a terrifying passage! To be cast into everlasting fires is too horrendous to think about. So what does the world do about it? They try make hell less frightening. They use the word as a common part of everyday language. "What the hell!" "O hell!" People use it all the time as an expletive. They make jokes about hell. They want to make hell seem common, because the more common something is, the less frightening it is.

What a grave mistake! That is like being in a burning building and saying, "Oh well, the fire can't be that hot!" And then not try to get out. That is exactly where Satan wants you. If a person is not afraid of hell, they won't seek a way to escape it.

We Need to Keep Hell Real!

1. Hell is as Horrible as it Sounds.

Did you know that Jesus has more to say about Hell than all the Apostles and prophets. How can you claim to believe in Jesus, but not believe what He says. Do they think He is lying to them? If so why follow Him?

Jesus doesn't lie! He is not trying to scare us into submission. Hell is a reality that Jesus is warning us about so that we will turn to Him to save us from that terrible fate. Jesus says it is a place of "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Those who don't believe Jesus are believing the lies of the devil. Therefore they will share the devil's punishment! In Revelation 20:14-15 we read, "Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." Whether that fire is a literal fire or figurative, either way, it describes Hell as a horrible place of suffering.

In several of His parables, Jesus describes hell as "Outer darkness where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth." Matt. 22:13 Imagine outer darkness, totally separated from the light of God's grace and goodness. There is no light at the end of the tunnel. No hope for escape, just never ending dark. That's why Jesus says there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth; grinding of teeth in despair and regret knowing that Jesus had saved them from this, but they didn't take it seriously. So now

there is nothing left but to join Satan and “be tormented day and night forever and ever.” Rev. 20:10

It’s only natural that people try to lessen the fear. There are two ways of doing that. One way is to make the idea of hell seem common. Make jokes about it. If you can laugh about it, then it isn’t so fearful. Some people even make it sound like a good thing, “All my buddies will be there. It will be a big party.” Eventually people simply deny that it exists. They just don’t believe it is true. They say it’s just an invention of man to keep people in fear and subjection. There’s no way a loving God would do something so horrible!

That method seems to work pretty well. People seem to live a carefree, happy go lucky life without constant fear. But what about when they die and discover that Jesus was telling the truth? Just denying the reality of hell or making it seem harmless isn’t going to make its fires any less hot. This method only ignores the fear and puts it off.

Only Jesus can Remove the Fear of Hell.

Hell is what Jesus suffered for us on the cross. Jesus was cast out from the presence of His Father into the outer darkness. The sun was literally darkened for three hours, so we could get a little picture of that darkness. You can hear the anguish in His voice as He cried out, “My God, My God, why have YOU for forsaken Me?” Jesus endured the ultimate punishment for us. He bore all the sins of the world in His own body on the cross. We can’t even imagine the torment He endured. Jesus paid the full penalty for all our sins. When we believe Him and call upon Him for our forgiveness, we will never have to experience that outer darkness; that wrath and punishment of God because Jesus suffered that for us.

Then Jesus rose from the dead, declaring His victory over hell. The first thing He did after He rose from the dead was to descend into hell to proclaim His victory over Satan and the spirits of all the unbelievers in prison. When we trust in Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection, there is no need to fear hell. He has saved us from hell. The book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus took part in our flesh and blood so “that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, AND release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Heb. 2:14-15. Jesus has released us from the fear of death and the fear of hell through His death in our place. Receive God’s forgiveness by faith and you will never experience the torment of hell.

We NEED to keep Hell Real. May we never join the world in using the word hell as an expletive or any common way which diminishes the horrors of hell.

The Horror of Hell shows the Glory of our Saviour.

If we make hell common or no big deal, then we make Jesus’ sacrifice common and no big deal. Universalists believe in heaven but do not believe in a literal hell. They believe that the most wicked will be annihilated and everyone else will go to Heaven, no matter what they believe. That makes a mockery of Jesus’ suffering. If everyone will go to heaven regardless of what they believe, there was absolutely no reason for Christ to suffer and die.

That, in turn, makes God out to be a horrible monster. They claim they are defending God’s love, because a loving God simply wouldn’t punish anyone that way. Do they realize what they are saying? If God would never punish anyone that way, then why did God punish His own holy Son, Jesus? Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” How cruel and unthinkable if God made Jesus suffer all that torment when it was possible to spare Him. If God could simply forgive and save people who deserve His punishment without any payment, and yet He punished His own perfectly innocent, holy Son, that would be a despicable, unjust God. We need to understand the true horrors of Hell so that we understand the true justice and holiness of God who punished His Son in our place because there was no other way to save us. Our sins are that serious.

That brings us to another thing, those who diminish the horror of hell, also diminish the dreadfulness of sin. They make sin a trifling thing that doesn't need to be paid for or forgiven. So why struggle against sin? What's the point of repentance and turning away from sin? There's no need! Hell is the punishment for sin, for disobedience against God's law. When we understand that, we will hate sin and want to turn away from sin and flee to our Saviour in repentance when we have given in to those soul destroying sins. If we turn back to a life of sin we will lose our salvation. When we know that, we will want to avoid sin **at all cost**.

Best of all, when we have a firm grasp on the reality of hell and the horribleness of hell, we will have a much greater appreciation for the love of our Saviour who willingly suffered our hell for us and has freed us from the fear of hell forever. About a month ago Julie and I went to a community concert by the Arrogant Worms. Their concert was funny and enjoyable, until the encore. They sang "*Jesus' brother Bob*." It was a blasphemous song that made a mockery of Jesus' death and resurrection. And even worse, the crowd went crazy cheering them on. The only way anyone could enjoy something like that is if they don't appreciate the tremendous sacrifice Jesus made.

We need to keep hell real, for only in seeing the horrors of hell will we see the full glory of our Saviour's love in being willing to suffer hell for us so that we could enjoy heaven. He endured shame and agony so that we can live in righteousness, love and peace. He was forsaken by His Father so that we can be held in His loving arms, close to His heart forever. When we maintain the true horror of hell and see the true glory of our Saviour, then and only then will we love Him above all things and thank Him with all our heart that He saved us from such a horrible fate by suffering it all for us.

We will close with Paul's words to Titus 2:11-14 "11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."

Amen.