

NEWS AND VIEWS
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*“Southern Baptists with the Full
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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VOLUME 41

October 2019

NUMBER 10

Have you heard a good story lately? I've noticed a lot of movies lately that begin with *The following is based on a true story*. I often wonder what *based on a true story* really means. Is it part of the whole story? Has something in the story been changed to advance some agenda? Has part of the story been hidden to keep from offending someone's sensibilities? What is the attraction of a true story? Jesus was, and still is, a Master Storyteller. Here's one of my favorites. So what will we do with what we hear?

Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so 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 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. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.' And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house — for I have five brothers — in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; 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, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.' (Luke 16:19-31)

This parable teaches that the knowledge required to believe God and receive faith is given to us in the Scriptures. The rich man, as well as his brothers, had the faithful evidence of a future reality revealed in the writings of God's people under the direction of the Holy Spirit. But it seems they did not believe it. Lazarus is pictured as one who suffered greatly, and the rich man prospered immensely. But the reality of two realities is stark and glaring. The rich man gave no thought of his future plight, or the present torment of Lazarus as he passed by him at the gate of his house. The rich man knew the name of Lazarus, but did not see about his welfare, even having the power to do so. He saw Lazarus without *seeing* Lazarus. He knew his name without knowing the man. Knowing the heart of God, revealed in the word of God, would have directed the rich man to try to improve Lazarus' life by showing him mercy. That is what God would do. In the man's future and final state, he cries out for mercy. This man no doubt believed he was in control of so much in his earthly life. Now arrived at the destination of his destiny, his final resting place, he is in tormented and restless. A useless attempt to manipulate Father Abraham he discovers his fatal flaw. He did not listen to Moses and the Prophets. God's word was not a priority in his life. Here's a lesson to us. God's word tells us how to live in the here and now and informs us about the by and by. Our future destiny is being shaped by our faith in God and His word, or the lack of it. Jesus was teaching about the futility of trusting in wealth and power to save and keep us. This parable follows the instruction about how we serve and who we serve. To those who first heard this story I wonder if they were impacted with the truth that when it is within our power to help another, God expects that from us. He teaches that in His word. In Jesus' day and our day, there are those who are not persuaded about the power of God according to the Resurrection. So the fact of that event will not give us faith to believe God. But the God of the Resurrection gives us faith to believe in the Resurrection and every promise revealed in God's good word. When we trust the truth of God's word, that is the first step of trusting Him.

Here's the question before us today...*who has been laid at your gate?* Who are you walking around while making decisions that will in the end be found to be so insignificant? A day is coming when the day will be a never-ending reality. What will that day be like? Let's ask Moses and the Prophets.

Then let's live like we believe what we hear.

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam