

Think Again . . . Reconnecting with Jesus

KSBC 09/21/08

Thinking Again About Choices

Luke 16:19-31

INTRO Choices matter. Think about your choices. The Bible teaches that we reap what we sow. We are affected this morning by choices we made regarding how late to stay up last night and how much time we spent in the scriptures and prayer this past week. Your choices of how you respond to Jesus and his teaching matter eternally. It can be confusing, because many believe they have made the right choices regarding Jesus but they have not.

Jesus teaches that our choices define not only the genuineness of our faith, but they also determine our eternal destiny. Hearing Jesus' words and then choosing to put them into practice is the determining issue of biblical Christianity (Matt. 7:24ff).

A distinguishing characteristic of religious unbelief is a tenacious grip on belief and practice within a religious system while rejecting the day to day, functional authority of Jesus Christ. Jesus does not have any regulatory control over our decisions and choices. Not taking Jesus and his teaching seriously is seen in adopting the values of the world we live in and then blessing it as 'Christian' by comparing ourselves with others(16:14-15). Jesus continues to challenge his followers to think carefully about their own choices through the response of religious leaders to his pointed stories.

Listen and think about the story of the shrewd (crooked) employee. Watch and listen to the response of the religious leaders who love money. Now listen and consider a story about two men who die and what happens in the afterlife. How do your choices regarding Jesus and the scriptures measure up to the point Jesus is making?

The longer we follow Jesus as our Lord and Savior the easier it is to fall into patterns and habits that may be both disobedient and ineffective because we have not given serious thought to what Jesus really teaches or requires. We do tend to compare ourselves with others. We evaluate ourselves based on our past behaviors. We take comfort in past battles won. A sense of staleness invades our faith expression that is barely noticeable to even the closest observer.

Review/set context 16:1-13

The Parable 1-8
The Point 8

The shrewdness of the steward is seen in his thinking ahead, acting decisively and maximizing his future interests. He was calculatingly driven by the desire for a certain return on his investment.

The Application 9-13

1. Are you intentionally generous? V.9
2. Are you decisively faithful? V.10-12
3. Are you exclusively devoted? V.13

Review Luke 16:14-18

Jesus condemns Pharisees response to his teaching 14-15
Declaration of kingdom authority in Christ 16-17
Example of behavior from a scoffing heart 18

Read Luke 16:19-31

This life.	19-21
Next life.	22-23
Warnings and realities.	24-31

Think again about your choices . . .

Because choices determine eternal destiny, cannot be reversed in the next life and reflect your heart orientation toward God . . . think again about your choices!

1. The choices you are making about what is most important. 23-26 (25)

Choices made by the rich man determined his afterlife experience. What a contrast!

- The value and importance of stuff.
- The value and importance of justice.
- The value and importance of God's words.
- The value and importance of eternal destiny.

Contrast Hades with Abraham's side . . .

- Conscious torment with comfort
- Permanent separation with closeness
- Hopeless sorrow with confidence

Compare and reflect on teaching of 16:9-13.

Illus. w Matt. 7:24ff Listen and do

2. The choices you are making about your source of truth. 27-29

Jesus' point in the story through Abraham (v.29, 31), is that the scriptures are both sufficient and necessary for the salvation of people. Think about your choices regarding the scriptures.

- Scripture points to Jesus. 16:16-17; 24:25-27
- Scripture identifies the human dilemma. Will not listen/see #3
- Scripture is the source of new life. 1Peter 1:23-25; Jas.1:18 L24:32

Cmp. L11:28 hear and obey

Consider ways sufficiency of scripture is minimized.

False premise: There is something greater than God's words through his prophets/servants.

3. The choices you are making about defining the basic problem. 30-31

The rich man and Abraham are on opposite sides of the 'what's the problem' question. What they identify as the problem defines and motivates their choices. Your choices reflect what you believe is your basic problem or need.

- The problem is opportunity; I need more time and a better situation.
- The problem is evidence; I need signs that are compelling.
- The problem is my heart; I need help with my unbelief.

Cmp. Romans 10:14-21

Eph.2:1-9

Jeremiah 17:1-10

I've Got It! I Know What I'll Do!

1. Prayerfully evaluate and compare my values to Jesus teaching.
2. Humbly seek change today that will matter 1,732 years from now.
3. Cry out to God to help your unbelief and change your heart.

Study Questions

1. What questions, observations or impressions do you have from today's study on Luke 16?

2. Read Luke 16:19-31. Review the point of this example story/parable. Do you think the point is more of a warning to people about caring for the poor or a warning about listening to God's word through Jesus? . . . or something else? Note – discuss the contrasts between now and then, Hades and the rich man's side, etc.
3. Share an example of a choice that you struggle giving Jesus control over. Share an example of a difficult choice you've made recently that will have good consequences 1000 years from now.
4. How do you determine or measure what is valuable to a person? How significant are choices a person makes to his or her values? Share which of the values listed in point one you tend to struggle with the most and how that is evidenced in your choices.
5. This story provides a word picture of the afterlife – where people go when they die. What are some of the lessons or principles about the afterlife that are taught by comparison with these graphic scenes in the story? What other scripture passages would you turn to for help in understanding what life after death is really like?
6. How can you help your friends and family members who choose to not listen to God's words? Should you be concerned that they have opportunity/chances to hear? Should you be concerned that they hear and see compelling evidence that God's words are true?
7. What bothers you the most about the rich man's behavior throughout the story? Why?
8. What do you want to do, use or remember from today's study?