

Jesus on Hell

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[0 : 0 0] Lord our God, we ask that you would imprint on our hearts a strong sense of the day when we will have to stand before your judgment throne, and of the preciousness of the plea we have by the blood of Christ, and of the horrors of what remains for those who do not have that plea.

So make us alive and open our eyes to these important matters we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Please have a seat, friends. Well, there are really two main truths that have motivated me to want to preach on hell tonight and over the next few weeks.

The first truth is that whoever you are coming in tonight, you're going to die soon. That's a fact. Don't think that you can put off thinking about your death.

Death's around the corner. Now, your life is a mist. You're here today and tomorrow you will disappear. God is providentially in control of that time when you will die.

It could happen at any moment. So I think the wise person, the person who fears God, rightly thinks about being ready to die or dying. You would think about that every day if you are wise.

[1 : 1 7] You will wake up and say to God, thank you, Lord, that I'm here for another day. Help me to serve you and trust in you and walk with you today. When the wise go to bed, they say, thank you, God, for another day of serving you.

If I die in the night, may you forgive me by the blood of Christ if I die tonight. If we are wise as a church, if Holy Trinity is wise, then we will be mindful of this fragility of life in all that we do.

I mean, just say, hypothetically speaking, I don't have a word from the Lord, but if I had a word from the Lord that he was going to take one of our teenagers from this church and they would die in 2008, just say I had that clear in my mind that God spoke that to me, would that change anything in our church?

Would that change anything in our youth ministry? I hope that it wouldn't. I hope that actually our youth ministry is already focusing on the reality of meeting our maker and the reality of meeting God and facing judgment.

That we're already talking about the importance of knowing Jesus and of the fragility of life already in our youth group. So that even if we knew that, it wouldn't change what we do at Holy Trinity, that we are constantly living under the shadow of death, hoping in Christ, preparing for that day.

[2 : 3 4] So that's the first reality that's driving me to this topic. We're going to die soon. The second reality is, friends, you are going to live forever.

You're going to live forever according to the teaching of Jesus. You are destined for immortality, Christian, non-Christian. This life is not all there is.

This life is actually relatively short. If you line up all the books in the world, your life is but one page of the first book. And then there are just millions of pages following.

We are not inherently eternal. I don't think we're human beings are inherently immortal, that our souls are inherently immortal. Only God is immortal. Only God is eternal by nature.

But it appears that one of the privileges God bestows on some of his creation, say on angels, is that they live forever. They're immortal. A kind of derivative immortality.

[3 : 40] And it appears from Jesus' teaching and from all the scriptures that God grants to his image bearers, to people, the same kind of derivative immortality and existence that will go forever.

So, friend, you are bound shortly for another world. Which world will it be? You're a backpacker. You're a traveller.

Shortly going to another destination. But which destination will it be? Now, it's a hard topic and there's some consolation in that Jesus spoke of hell more than anyone.

So, if we care about Jesus, if we call ourselves followers of him, then I think we will want to investigate this topic and believe what he taught on hell.

I think there's something wrong when we have a taboo topic in the church or we don't like to think about something that Jesus taught a lot about. There's something wrong in our Christian life, in our discipleship.

[4 : 40] Some Christians, I worry about this. They're so bold even to say, you know, I will believe in God and Jesus, but I won't believe in a God who sends people to hell. And they just blanket tell God what to do with hell.

People say, you know, it's kind of a feigned weakness. They say, oh, I just can't believe in hell. It's just too hard for me. Jesus taught it.

One of the great atheists of the 20th century was Bertrand Russell, who in a very famous paper, famous essay called Why I'm Not a Christian, it's really quite a terrible essay. Most of his reasons for not being a Christian are invalid.

But he has one good reason for not being a Christian, and that is he doesn't like hell. And he says, therefore, Jesus at that point is morally defective.

And he rejects Jesus because he doesn't like the idea of hell. And Russell, I think, has some integrity at that point. And he's from the 20th century. He's a modernist.

[5 : 40] He has an intellectual consistency, unlike the postmodern person today who likes to pick and choose from the Bible the bits they like and just basically ignore the rest and pretend that they're still a disciple of Jesus.

I think if you only accept Christ on the condition that things you don't like you can leave out, then you're not really a Christian, are you? You're actually still acting as Lord over the Bible, Lord over Jesus.

You're not actually submitting to him as your Lord. You're not a Christian yet. It's similar to the way some sexually immoral Christians will say, you know, I want to be a Christian, but I want to be a gay Christian.

And I'll believe everything in the Bible except for these gay texts. You know, we cannot pick and choose like that. And I think we are all very good at doing that in some way or another. And I fear that together we're in danger of doing that with the doctrine of judgment and therefore the doctrine of hell.

And we're put in a position basically of the rich young ruler who liked everything about Jesus and was really keen. And Jesus said, one more thing is required. Sell everything you have and give it to the poor.

[6 : 56] And, well, he walks away because he doesn't want to give that one thing to submit to Jesus as Lord. And so I fear that for some of us, the topic of judgment and of eternal judgment is that one thing which we actually need to decide.

We will trust Jesus' words. And even if we struggle with them, we will believe them or just walk away. The bottom line, I think, friends, is that you need to be able to say, the Bible says it, God wrote it, I believe it.

It's really that simple. The Bible says it, God wrote it, I believe it. Now, it may be that you struggle with it and you wrestle with it, but it has to have that attitude of submission to the Lord Jesus.

And I want to encourage you over the coming weeks, if you are struggling with these issues, and how can you not, if you are struggling with them, please talk to me about it after church or talk to each other about it or write me an email or even if you are really angry about something, leave me an anonymous note in my pigeonhole on the way out and I will get your note and I will answer it in the next sermon.

Or you could leave your name on it. That would be braver. And friends, you need bravery to talk about hell, don't you?

[8 : 14] Well, Jesus was a preacher of hell and judgment. I'm going to go through a lot of texts tonight and we're going to surf a lot of texts you really won't be able to follow. The best thing to do is basically this week, just read through each of the Gospels looking for his teaching on judgment.

That's what I've done this week and I've found lots. Jesus was a preacher of hell and judgment. And, you know, that terrible myth, that shallow myth that the God of the Old Testament is kind of angry and Jesus and the God of the New Testament is loving, that is so easily busted by actually reading the New Testament and seeing how angry Jesus gets and how much he talks about judgment, how much he talks about hell.

I actually think those terrible passages in the Old Testament of holy war and of God using Israel to judge violently other nations for their sin, I think they're fulfilled in Jesus.

They're fulfilled in his teaching of global judgment. Jesus actually expands those horrific specific acts of judgment and expands them to a global scale in his teaching on the judgment of the nations.

Jesus is the fulfillment of all scripture, even those texts of judgment. And it's funny, we even miss some things. As Jesus walks around, he's thinking about judgment.

[9 : 34] Listen to this text from Matthew 11. Matthew 11 verse 20, He says, Jesus is angry.

Woe to you, Chorazin, woe to you, Bethsaida. For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre or Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

But I tell you, on the day of judgment, so Jesus knows what's going to happen, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven?

No, you'll be brought down to Hades, hell. For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that on the day of judgment, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for you.

So wherever Jesus goes in his preaching ministry, he's already kind of telling what will happen to these places on the day of judgment. He's already kind of weighing the scales. He tells Chorazin that they're going to have more judgment than these great Old Testament evil cities because they rejected Jesus.

[10 : 43] Now, Jesus is God and God knows all things. So Jesus actually reveals here, he knows what people would do under different circumstances. He knows what would have happened. He says, Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented if they had seen what you'd seen.

So your judgment will be worse than their judgment. And that's a lot, actually, because Sodom is the kind of representative city of judgment. In Genesis 19, it rained fire from heaven on violent judgment on the city of Sodom.

And Jesus says, on the day of global judgment, these places that rejected him will get worse judgment than Sodom. Even at Jesus' birth, it was taught, Jesus is destined for the rising and falling of many.

Then John the Baptist said of him, that he will come and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. I don't think Jesus has done that yet, but he will.

Jesus taught blessings to people, and he taught woes to people. He taught that those people who don't build their lives on his teaching, it's like building a house that will crash.

[11 : 59] They will crash. He taught people to not fear men who kill the body, but to fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast him to hell.

So don't just fear people who can hurt you on earth. Fear him who can not only kill you, but cast your body into hell. That is, God himself. Jesus taught of judgment on rich people, on rich fools who hoped in their riches.

He preached judgment against religious hypocrites. He said they will receive the greater condemnation. There are levels of condemnation in Jesus' judgment.

He taught that those who have been given much, much more will be required. And of a parable of a servant who received a severe beating, because he knew much and yet rejected the master.

He taught of hypocrites being cast out in weeping and gnashing of teeth. I mean, that phrase alone, the weeping and gnashing of teeth, just comes up again and again and again. Jesus told a parable, and we don't have time tonight to go into this in detail, but it's a pretty scary parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16.

[13 : 14] A parable of the torments of hell and of the chasm between hell and heaven, or hell and our reality, a chasm that can't be bridged, a place of no return.

Jesus warned us of the public shame and humiliation that we will receive on the day of judgment if we are ashamed of him and of his words, of his gospel.

He said it's better to lose your life now for him than to gain the whole world and lose your soul on the day of judgment. He warned that those who cause children to stumble, well, it would be better for them to have never been born, it would be better for them to hang a millstone around their neck and jump off a cliff into the ocean.

He taught of a hell where the worm of punishment never dies and the fire is never quenched. That's in Mark 9, verse 48, where the worm of punishment never dies and the fire is never quenched.

He spoke a parable of the wicked tenants who destroyed the son of the owner and the owner came and destroyed those tenants.

[14 : 31] It's a pretty obvious parable. He spoke of wars around the world, which we see as being just the beginnings of the birth pains of his judgment.

So we think war is hell, we think war is horrible. Jesus says that they're the beginnings of the birth pains of his judgment. He said of his betrayer, Judas, he said, woe to him, it would be better for him to have not have been born.

Where is Judas now? Judas is in hell. Even he spoke of a sin that would not be forgiven in this age and not be forgiven in the age to come, the blasphemy or the sin against the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is not all forgiving. There's actually a time period, a window of opportunity, and then sin will not be forgiven in the age to come.

The loving Jesus who wept over Jerusalem and he longed for Jerusalem to turn to him and receive him as the Messiah, as the Christ, and he weeps over it.

[15 : 43] But in the same event where he weeps in Luke 19, he pronounces judgment. So Jesus is able to love people and weep for them and pronounce judgment.

And as he weeps for them in love, he says to them, they will crush you to the ground, Jerusalem, you and your children within you, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.

Jesus taught that judgment was coming, that he was going to be the judge. The Father had entrusted all judgment to the Son and it would not be a nice time, it would be a terrible time.

And so he taught that as we suffer in this world, as catastrophes happen, as there are tsunamis and earthquakes, they are warnings to us of the time when he will come as judge.

I mean, people would call this insensitive. They now Luke 13. There was some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

[16 : 50] That is, Pilate was a cruel governor and Pilate had cruelly tortured and killed these Galileans. And Jesus asked them, do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way, that they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?

No, I tell you. Now that's helpful because that says when suffering does happen, it doesn't mean that you're a worse sinner than the person who's actually getting away from it because the day of judgment will set all those records straight.

Jesus says, No, but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those 18 who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them, just a kind of an act of God, as it were.

A tower fell and 18 people died in the crowd. Do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you, Jesus says, but unless you repent, you will perish just as they did.

Jesus warns that human suffering is a global warning to everyone that unless we repent, we will perish as they did.

[18 : 02] And I think he has in mind not just earthly perishing, but the judgment after death of how we will perish after we die on the day of judgment. Jesus taught in Luke 12, I've come to bring fire on the earth and how I wish that it were already kindled.

I have a baptism with which to be baptized and what stress I am under until it is completed. He's talking about, we'll talk more about this next week when we think about what Jesus went through to save us from hell.

He has a baptism to undergo. And he says, do you think that I've come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. I haven't come to bring peace, but a sword, not peace, but division.

You see, Jesus came on a rescue mission, but those who aren't rescued actually are still facing their judgment and they are in deep trouble.

So the cross of Jesus, the message of the gospel is very divisive because it divides those who are being saved and those who aren't. It divides those who are rescued from hell and those who are still facing the judgment of hell.

[19 : 18] I mean, I think we lose sight of this face of Jesus. Even some of his most well-known teaching contains this theme, this pattern of judgment.

John 3.16, for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal life. Jesus is teaching that unless you believe in him, receive his salvation, you will perish.

The verses that follow from that make that even clearer. He says that he did not enter the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Sort of the assumption there is that his prerogative could have been to enter the world to condemn it.

We're in a state of condemnation, but the beautiful thing about the gospel is that he came to rescue us, not condemn us. But, he goes on, those who believe in him are not condemned, but those who do not believe are condemned already because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

So if Jesus is to bring a gospel of rescue, then it's only going to make clearer those who haven't received the rescue. So his message is not really one of peace.

[20 : 33] For us it's peace with God, but he will in effect divide people, those who will be rescued and those who don't want that rescue or don't think they need it.

Now we'll look a bit closer, although probably too briefly. In Matthew 25, there are three parables of judgment. And I think that they're very, very helpful and we're not going to look at them in full detail.

They're actually quite cryptic, especially the second one. It's got some extremely difficult stuff. But what I want to show you is in the parables, especially at the end of the parables, there are some really fierce warnings of judgment.

There are some very scary warnings of judgment. Now the first parable we'll look at the least. It's the parable of the ten bridesmaids and five of them were foolish, five were wise, five were ready for the bridegroom when he came, when he returned.

It's the parable of the return of Christ in judgment. And five weren't ready. And of the five that weren't ready, it says in verse 10 that they go off to buy their oil for their lamps and the bridegroom came and those who were ready went in with him into the wedding banquet.

[21 : 47] That's heaven. And those who were out sort of getting their oil who weren't ready, the door was shut. The door of the wedding banquet was shut. Jesus speaks of the day of judgment as being people being invited into the wedding banquet and others, the door being shut permanently.

Now the second parable is the hardest one, the parable of the talents. It's not a parable, I'm pretty sure it's not a parable about using your natural talents or abilities.

The talent is actually a term for money. It's a term for a lot of money. Our NRSV footnote says a talent was more than 15 years of wages.

So say it's 15 or 20 years of wages. It's like someone giving you a million dollars and saying, use this, resource this for me.

So if anything, it's a parable, I think, about being faithful stewards of what God gives us. And I'm partial to this interpretation, though I can't kind of guarantee it, but the greatest gift God has given us is the gospel, the greatest treasure, the power of God is in the gospel.

[23 : 01] So God entrusts us with the gospel and we can live for the gospel, we can share the gospel, we can multiply the gospel, or we can hide the gospel and shun it and forget about it and then get into trouble when the master returns.

Well, let's look at what happens when the master returns to those who multiplied it in verse 21. His master said to him, this to the one who has made five more talents, well done, good and trustworthy slave.

You've been trustworthy in a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. And this is a key phrase, enter into the joy of your master. Enter into the joy of your master.

To the faithful, God is glorious, generous, joyful. The best reward God could ever give you is to say, enter into my joy.

Enter into the joy of heaven, the joy I have in my son, I have in the spirit, I have in myself. Enter into the joy of your master. But verse 24, to the unfaithful slave, and you can tell how much this unfaithful slave resents the master.

[24 : 17] 24, to the one who had received one talent also came forward saying, Master, I knew that you were a harsh man reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you did not scatter seed.

So I was afraid and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, have what is yours. You can sense that he actually hasn't taken joy in what the master takes joy in and hasn't actually thought of his master as being generous.

He's resentful about the master. He shuns God and Jesus unleashes on him via the parable just a torrent of personal judgment.

His master replied, verse 26, you wicked and lazy slave. You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I did not scatter. Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers and on return I would have received what was my own with interest.

So take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten. For to all those who have more will be given and they will have an abundance. But from those who have nothing even what they have will be taken away.

[25 : 29] As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The slave who is wicked and lazy, the slave who slurs the character of God or the character of Jesus just by his indifference he will be punished.

There's great blessing and great punishment. Those who have been given a lot and they are faithful, they will be given in abundance. But those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.

They will be thrown into the outer darkness. That is, I think, hell, the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. The Luke 19 version of the same parable is even more violent.

You can look that up in your own time. But you see, in a parable like this, eternity is polarized between, it's very black and white, between those who enter the master's joy and those to whom he says, depart from me into the outer darkness.

Those who are faithful to God's treasure and trusted to them in the gospel of Jesus enter into the joy of God, the joy of the wedding banquet. Those who spurn the gospel and slur God's character lose everything and are cast into outer darkness.

[26 : 50] the third parable is the sheep and the goats, probably the most well known of Matthew 25. Our NRSV has judgment of the nations and that's good, that's a helpful title because it starts by saying, when the Son of Man comes in his glory and the angels with him, he will sit on the throne of his glory and all the nations will be gathered before him.

So Jesus will be the judge of all the nations of the world. When Jesus returns, his judgment is a global judgment. It's not just a judgment on Christian nations, if there was such a thing, or on Christians.

It's actually one judge, one standard of judgment across nations. And what Jesus does is he separates. All the nations gather before him, he will separate people one from another.

As a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, he'll put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left. No one will escape this judgment, this separation of sheep and goats.

I think there'll be sheep from every nation and there'll be goats from every nation. The sheep are the children of the Father, the ones Jesus says are blessed by him, they're given an inheritance, they are the brothers or the family of Jesus, brothers and sisters.

[28 : 12] And Jesus says they're the ones who have fed him and cared for him and visited him in prison. He says whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.

And the goats are described in verse 41, the accursed, the ones that are told to depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

That's hell, the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. I don't know where our movies and culture gets this idea that the devil's in charge of hell, he's cast into hell as punishment.

Jesus is the one who's in control of that. It's a judgment of works. It's a judgment of works of, I think, of evidential works, of what's the evidence of how the gospel of grace worked in your life.

And the evidence is in how you treat the church around the world, how you treat Jesus' brothers and sisters. I don't think as many people take it, it's a parable about feeding the poor in general or caring for the sick in general.

[29 : 24] He says, what you did for the least of these brothers of mine. I think it's people who are suffering for the gospel, people in jail for being a brother of Jesus or sick or naked for the gospel.

If you love the master Jesus, you will love the church, you will love his brothers and sisters. brothers and this is one of the criteria by which we will be judged. Do you have the evidence, you're saved by grace, but do you have the evidence of that grace working in your life in this way?

I don't think we're worried enough about our starving brothers and sisters in Christ around the world or our persecuted, hungry, jailed, homeless brothers and sisters around the world.

And so friends, the parables, though not every element is clear, the destiny part is quite clear, isn't it? Matthew 25 ends, these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

How long does heaven go for? Forever. But contrasted to that is the eternal punishment. It's the worst thing, I think, that God could ever say to someone is, depart from me, enter into the eternal fire prepared for the devil, the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[30 : 49] So I think in Jesus' teaching, heaven and hell are bound up in proximity to God. If he says, join in the master's joy, if he says, come into the wedding banquet, then you are in the joyful place of the sovereign Lord forever.

you will dwell, you will see face to face the creator of every good gift you enjoy, of food and drink and sunshine and beaches, you will dwell with the maker of those things and enjoy the creator, not just the created thing.

But if he says, depart from me, then you lose God and with God you lose every gift of God. Do you see? When you say no to God you actually lose every gift of God and all that is left is pain and suffering.

There is no joy or satisfaction without God. Our view of God, this is the reformed evangelical view of God, it's a biblical one, is that God is all glorious.

Our chief end is to know God and enjoy him forever. God is the biggest eternal source, infinite source of happiness and pleasure in a person we could ever know.

[32 : 08] Heaven is God, hell is life without God, when he says, depart from me. This is tricky because life now is actually not a good measure. If you're without God in this life, you actually get to free ride all God's gifts.

You actually get to enjoy God's gifts without the creator. But the free ride ends on the day of judgment and darkness begins for those to whom God says, depart from me.

If you've told God, I don't want to know you or I want you on the fringe only or I'll come to you later, if you've rejected God in that way, then he will say, okay, well depart from me.

The most horrible words God could ever say. So hell exists because God is so glorious. Hell exists because God is so wonderful that to be separated from him is hell.

So hell is not a kind of a kind of a I don't know, an insult to the character of God. It's not a bruise on his reputation.

[33 : 17] Hell is there because God is so perfect. He is so holy. Hell is there because God is so glorious. And to lose him is to lose every good thing. Well, one more text, and this will be our kind of concluding text.

It's the one that Esther read. Matthew 5, Sermon on the Mount, greatest teaching of Jesus, or people say the greatest sermon ever preached, has lots of stuff in it about hell.

He says, very briefly, he says, you know, people who murder are liable to judgment, but if you get angry, if you even say to someone, you fool, like in your heart insults someone in anger, you'll be liable to the hell of fire, or the hell of Gehenna.

And he kind of has this little parable, he says, if you're leaving your gift at the altar, be reconciled to your brother before doing business with God, be reconciled to your brother.

And I think it's a parable of getting right with God before you die. Don't face judgment, don't face the kind of throne of God without being reconciled to him.

[34 : 28] Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you'll be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

And of course it's talking about reconciliation between brother to brother, it's horizontal relationships, but it's also talking about getting reconciled to God before it's too late, before you can't get out of jail.

And he goes on to say, you've heard it said, those you shall not commit adultery, but I'll tell you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Now that's a harsh teaching, isn't it? That you've committed adultery by looking at pornography. You've committed adultery by thinking lustfully about someone in church or someone in a magazine.

sin. It's funny that the things that cause us to sin, like I think we have so much money and we have so much free time and that leaves us open to sin.

[35 : 34] The best thing we could do is actually give all our money away to the persecuted Christians overseas and we'd be both fulfilling Matthew 25 and Matthew 5. Jesus says, if your right hand causes you to sin, tear it out.

If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out, throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members and for your whole body to be thrown into hell. Who's throwing people into hell?

Jesus is. He's threatening it. If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off, throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members and for your whole body to go into hell.

Now, I'm not, you know, we've got to think about the way this metaphor works or this hyperbole works.

No one's saying, cut off your hand, physically, are they? No one's saying, tear out an eye. Therefore, you know, the lazy Christian says, it's just exaggeration, therefore I can just file it away and forget about it.

[36 : 38] No. If I say, I'm going to break you into little pieces from here to Port Hedland for touching my wife, that's hyperbole, but it's still a threat.

The police would take that as a threat. I could be charged for putting that in writing or saying that clearly. Matthew 5 is still a serious threat, even though Jesus uses hyperbole or kind of metaphor of cutting off your hand.

He's saying, actually, treat sin violently. Get violent with your sin and casting it away, lest your sins entangle you such that you miss the kingdom of God.

It is metaphorical language, but it's a serious threat of hell. See, even the images we have of hell, of fire, you know, eternal fire, of fire and of darkness, they must be metaphors, because you can't have a dark place that has fire, because fire gives light.

But that doesn't take away the reality of hell. In fact, I think for all the metaphors and images of hell in the Bible, they are but images, and the reality will be far worse.

[37 : 50] The words cannot put into reality what it would be like. The pain of fire, yes, but with the loneliness of darkness, an eternity apart from God, under the condemnation that Jesus warned us of again and again.

Friends, tonight God is accusing you of not loving him with your whole heart, of shunning him despite all his goodness and good gifts to you, despite the very life of breath you have as I speak.

God is accusing you of running from him, of using others, using him, of free riding his world, living selfishly, not loving your neighbour as yourself.

The judgment of that is eternal, Jesus teaches very clearly. You know, it's hard to know how to be. I don't want to say I wish it wasn't true because it must be right if Jesus says this is how it is, but it's a terrible thing.

I found helpful this quote, and I'll finish with this, from Jonathan Edwards, who was a great, preacher of hell. He's known for a very famous sermon called Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.

[39 : 07] It's actually not his worst sermon in terms of hellfire. I'm going to give you a quote from a sermon called The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners. You can find it online.

It's an excellent sermon. He says this principle, our obligation to honour or love or obey anyone is proportional to that person's honourableness or their loveliness.

The more honourable someone is, the more you should honour them. That makes sense. God is a being of infinite greatness, majesty and glory. Infinite greatness, majesty and glory.

That's what we believe. Therefore, he is infinitely honourable. He is worthy of our infinite worship in heaven forever.

That's me saying that. Jonathan Edwards says, his authority over us is infinite. The ground of his right to our obedience is infinitely strong. He is infinitely worthy to be obeyed.

[40 : 16] And we have in him, we have an absolute universal and infinite dependence upon him. So that, and this is the key point, sin against God, being a violation of infinite obligations, must be a crime infinitely terrible.

Do you see the logic? I'll say it again. Sin against God, being a violation of infinite obligations, must be a crime infinitely terrible, horrible, evil, and so deserving of infinite punishment, which is exactly the kind of punishment our Lord Jesus spoke of and warned us of.

So, friends, tonight, come to terms quickly with your accuser. Run to Jesus Christ, renew your commitment to him tonight. The gift of salvation through the death of our Lord Jesus is on offer right now, but it may not be on offer to you tomorrow, it may be too late.

Friends, eternity comes too quickly, so let's cast ourselves on the Saviour now. Our Lord Jesus, we thank you that you knew what you were saying, and we believe your words.

We thank you that you died on the cross on your rescue mission to save us from something very real and very terrible. Lord Jesus, we pray that over the coming weeks we might actually draw closer to you through reflecting on the judgments that you spoke about, that we might better appreciate what you've done for us and actually love people more, love our friends more, who face this destiny without you and actually share with them the good news of the gospel.

[42 : 15] So Lord Jesus, give us a consistency across what we believe and a passion for the greatness of our salvation. Great because, Lord God, our Father, you are great and glorious, and that to turn our back on you, to depart from you is horrible and to face your active judgment is also horrible.

So Lord Jesus, we flee to you now in faith and we pray that we would constantly live trusting in you, talking to you, resting in you, depending on you. Lord Jesus, by your Spirit, don't let go of us, we ask, we plead with you.

Amen.