

Goal – that the hearers believe that there is a hell – and that by believing they thank God for saving them from it through Jesus Christ.

- **What is hell like?**
- I was asked a question about what heaven is like; and I thought it fitting to discuss both heaven and hell. It's very popular to talk about heaven – but it's far less popular to talk about hell. People come to church to be encouraged they say – but church is actually here for people to connect with the Lord; and part of that connection is confessing the truth – and the truth is that there is indeed a hell.
- Our LCMS has always maintained the truth of hell. As a matter of fact in our famous dogmatics book, Francis Pieper says this:
  - **Holy Scripture teaches the truth of an eternal damnation so clearly and emphatically that one cannot deny it without at the same time rejecting the authority of Scripture. Scripture parallels the eternal salvation of the believers and the eternal damnation of the unbelievers. Whoever therefore denies the one must, to be consistent, deny the other.**
- And again in our Lutheran Confessions – in the apology of the Augsburg confession, our Lutheran Fathers say this:
  - **We confess that at the consummation of the world Christ will appear and raise all the dead, granting eternal life and eternal joys to the godly but condemning the ungodly to endless torment with the devil.**
- Hell is real. Torment is real. The wrath of God is real. Jesus Himself says these words in John 5:28-29:
  - **<sup>28</sup> "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice<sup>29</sup> and come out-- those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.**
- These are Jesus' own words about hell. He too says that at the consummation of the ages the dead will rise – some will rise to eternal life and others to eternal condemnation.
- A few more of Jesus' own words on the subject matter. 1<sup>st</sup> Matthew 18:8
  - **<sup>8</sup> If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire.**

- Matthew 13:49-50
  - **<sup>49</sup> This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous<sup>50</sup> and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**
- The Apostle Paul too in the NT talks about eternal condemnation in these words – 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 1:6-9
  - **<sup>6</sup> God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you<sup>7</sup> and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.<sup>8</sup> He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.<sup>9</sup> They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power**
- And the Apostle John too speaks of eternal condemnation with these words in Revelation 20:13-15
  - **<sup>13</sup> The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.<sup>14</sup> Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.<sup>15</sup> If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**
- So here are the images that the Bible gives us concerning eternal condemnation – hell.
  - **Fiery Furnace – lake of fire.**
- Fire is often associated with hell. Now, what we have to do is imagine flame, heat, pain, and torment without end. One of the things that makes suffering sufferable is the fact that we all believe that the suffering isn't permanent. It will end. But the Lord makes it clear that the torment of hell is insufferable – almost precisely for the reason that it lasts eternally. It will never end.
- Some Christians have such a problem with the eternity of hell that they imagine that those in hell will be annihilated. They will simply cease to exist. But let me ask you something – when you destroy something it simply becomes something else. You burn wood, it becomes gas and ash. Gas and ash are still things – something does not become nothing. Food consumed turns to waste – but not nothing.

- I spoke to Andrei on the phone and this is what physicists call the 2<sup>nd</sup> law of thermodynamics. Energy is neither created nor destroyed. You can't create energy and you can't destroy it. It can be harnessed – but not destroyed.
- When God creates a soul – it's created. It will always be something.
- So a soul consumed in fire will not cease to exist. It may become a tortured thing – a small thing – a terrible thing – but something does not turn into nothing.
- Next:
  - **Utter abandonment and loneliness**
- Loneliness is its own kind of pain. For those that are often surrounded by family, friends, and loved ones, being alone is a thing that sometimes you want; but there's a difference between being alone – and being lonely. For some people loneliness is what they fight every single day. For some people they can be surrounded by a crowd of people – and yet still feel alone and incomplete. Imagine that – utter loneliness – no companionship – forever.
- Loneliness is like being isolated in a dark cave. You're all by yourself. All alone.
- I asked someone what being alone feels like – and they said that they can be surrounded by people – even family and friends – not like at a football game or a target – and be completely alone. They can feel isolated, like no one understands. Loneliness is its own kind of pain – and there's a difference between *feeling* alone and *being* alone. Hell is being alone. Forever. Being shut out. Locked away. For eternity.
- The next one is:
  - **The place of weeping and gnashing of teeth.**
- We weep in sorrow and we weep in regret. We weep when we know that we've done something wrong. Peter wept at denying Jesus – he was ashamed at the error of his ways. We weep too when we've hurt people, when we've hurt ourselves.
- What's the saddest you've ever been? Have you ever wept – I mean really wept? Have you ever been so filled with sorrow that you couldn't stop crying? Imagine that feeling – that feeling of despair, sorrow, and uncontrollable sadness – forever.

- Gnashing of teeth – that gnashing is from anger. What’s the angriest you’ve ever been? What kind of betrayal? What kind of unkindnesses? What’s the worst it’s been? Imagine that forever. A kind of anger forever.
  - This is hell – fire, pain, loneliness, sorrow, and anger. No grace. No mercy. No love.
- Now, it’s at this point that we have to ask two questions – and they demand answers.
- It’s common parlance today to talk about God, to talk about heaven – but to disbelieve hell. We’re told that God is a God of love – so there can’t be a hell.
- But the Bible declares it. The Lord’s own words make it so. There is a hell.
- And the necessity of it can be seen in this – so much grace, so much mercy, so much sacrifice – and still there’s a hell.
- There is no doctrine of the church that I want to believe less than this. I wish there was not a hell. But my wishing it doesn’t make it so. The church can avoid talking about it. We can place the truth of hell under a rug and never discuss it because we want to fill our churches and make people happy – but that won’t change the fact that hell is real.
- But I can tell you this – God desires that there would be no need of hell too. He didn’t want the devil to sin – and He didn’t want us to sin. But our sin demands that there be a hell.
- So let me ask two questions.
  - **Why is there a hell?**
  - **Who goes there?**
- Let’s make this very clear. God isn’t pleased with Hell. Hell doesn’t make Him smile. He sends no one there out of a sick kind of pleasure. God declares this in Ezekiel 33:11
  - **<sup>11</sup> Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?'**
- According to the Word of God, Hell was created to house the devil and his angels. It was a place of torment assigned to the spiritual creatures that went away into disobedience.

- But then mankind fell. We threw our dice into league with the enemy. We were tempted – we fell. And we became guilty.
- Hell exists because sin exists. And sin – disobedience must be punished. We live in a world today where sin is winked at – where disobedience is something shoved off to the side – where it’s pictured as not that big of a deal.
- But sin is a big deal to God. Do you want to know how big of a deal sin is to God? You need look no further than the cross of Christ.
- If sin wasn’t a big deal then Jesus wouldn’t have had to die for it. Hell exists because sin exists. Hell is a place of punishment. A punishment ultimately for rejecting Jesus as Lord.
- Which leads us to the final question this morning.
  - **Who goes there?**
- We need to look no further than the words of our Lord Himself. In the most famous verse of the Bible Jesus tells us who is saved?
  - <sup>16</sup> **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**
- And Jesus tells us also who is condemned. John 3:18 reads this:
  - <sup>18</sup> **Whoever believes in him [Jesus] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.**
- Some people say, “well, if you’re a good person you’ll go to heaven...” The problem with this mentality is that according to the standard of God, no one is good. Everyone is a lawbreaker.
- Last night my wife and I were reading the book of James together. Let’s open our **Bible’s to James 2:8-13**. We read...
- We’re all guilty. We’ve all broken the law. But mercy triumphs over judgment. Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sin. And if we believe in Him – if we trust in Him – if we’ve been moved by the Spirit of God to place our faith in Jesus – then we are forgiven our sins. Our sins are paid for. And we are invited to that eternal dinner party, we are the

bride of Christ, we are citizens of that great city – and singers in the eternal concert of heavenly glory for those that love Him.

- If we could have done it on our own – if we could have done it through our effort – then the Father would not of had to send His Son. But we can't. The best of the best this side of heaven is not good enough.
- The best of the best have sin. The most selfless human being is still sinful – they still have selfish motives – and they still haven't been the standard.
- Therefore we all must be humbled by our sin – we all must recognize it – and come before the cross of Christ, bow down, and simply acknowledge that we can't do it. We need Him.
- We must believe Him. It is through believing alone – trusting in the heart – that we are saved.
- We all deserve hell – but through God's mercy we get heaven.
- Who goes to hell?
  - Those that do not believe in God's one and only Son. Period. We can't have heaven our way. We can't have God our way. It is His way – and His way is through His beloved Son Jesus Christ. He died. He rose again. He lives. Amen.
- God is good....