Luke 7:41-50, John 3:16-21 - Thankful for what we don't have

1) What are you most thankful for?
2) Most of the time, when we think of giving thanks, we think of blessings we have **have** - for instance:
    a) People who care about us
    b) An unexpected gift
    c) Times of rest and refreshment
    d) Good health, especially after a sickness
    e) The beauty of creation
3) But sometimes true gratitude comes only when we think of we **don't have**
4) Romans 5:8: As Christians, we are thankful that God loved us and died for us "while we were still His enemy"
5) John 3:16: We are all familiar with this promise, that **"that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."**
6) In remembering what we **have** that we are thankful for, we often forget or downplay what we **don't have**, now that we have come to know and believe in Jesus
    a) We often think of both heaven and hell as future experiences - that if we "believe in Jesus" (whatever that means) we will be welcomed into fellowship with God in heaven and if we don't, we will be sent to hell and be separated from God
        a) God becomes the one to decide our fate
        b) If we go to hell it will be because, for some reason, God is not pleased with us
    b) But if we keep reading in John 3 we will see a very different reality
        a) We are told we are **already** under a sentence of eternal separation from the love of God because of our sinful nature and the wrongs we think and do
        b) Because we can not save ourselves, God Himself became human, and paid the debt our sin deserves
    c) As John 3:18 says, we are 'already condemned' but the sentence has not yet been - we are like criminals who are waiting for the sentence to be carried out
        a) It is as if we live in a house that is on fire, but the fire has not yet reached the room we are in
        b) We may not even know that a fire has started
        c) Meanwhile, the firefighter - Jesus - stands in the doorway declaring, "You will die if you stay in this room - and this door is your only way to safety
    d) All of a sudden, everything changes
        a) God doesn't decide our fate, the choice is ours:
            i. "Believe in Jesus and you will not perish but instead will have life"
            ii. Or "stay where you are until the fire destroys you
        b) Our place in hell has already been - but God gives us an opportunity to escape eternal death (Revelation 20:11-15), or we can ignore God, go our own way, and suffer the inevitable consequences (Proverbs 14:12, Ezekiel 33:11)
        c) Either way, it is not God who - in anger and rejection - sends us to hell in the future; rather, it is we who choose to remain under the sentence of death or choose the only way out - by not simply believing that Jesus is, but by following Him through the door of faith and on to the life beyond
7) Luke 7:41-50: We will only be thankful for Jesus enough to allow Him to challenge our ways of thinking and acting, if we:
    a) First appreciate who He is: "our great God and Savior" (Titus 2:3) (being thankful for Who we have)
    b) And second, truly understand what He offers to save us from (being thankful for what we no longer have and will never experience - eternal punishment
    c) Sin is real, and so are its consequences