



# THE EXHORTER

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***“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40***

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. ([prchurchofchrist.org](http://prchurchofchrist.org))

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## JUMP START #497

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**Luke 16:27-28** *“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.’”*

Our passage today comes from the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Powerful insights and pictures into what happens after we die. There seems to be some controversy as to whether this really happened or if this is a parable-either way, Christ is giving us a postcard of words into the next world. This is the most descriptive account of what happens to the soul when a person dies.

I’ve been thinking about this lately, I guess because I might be preaching on this soon. The rich man was in torment not because he was rich but because he was selfish. Poor Lazarus was laid at the rich man’s gates. The only way in and out was through the gates. The rich man did nothing. He never sent for help, he never even gave a cup of cold water to Lazarus. They both died. Lazarus most likely dumped into a pauper’s grave and the rich man probably had a grand send off. Opposites in life. Opposites in death.

In death, both men had a conscience presence about them, they had memory, feelings and identity. They existed. The journey doesn’t end at the cemetery. It ends with God.

There are two simple thoughts I want to share from our verse today.

First, the rich man lived as a practical atheist. That’s the worst kind. From the text it is apparent that he is a Jew. He recognized what Moses and the prophets meant-the law of God. He knew that. When he wanted word sent back to his family, the request was denied. He was told that they have Moses and the prophets. The same thing that the rich man had. He knew. Moses and the prophets had made no impression nor impact in his life. God’s law taught about caring for the poor. When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandments, He said the second one was to love your neighbor as yourself. He got that from Moses and the prophets. Practical atheism is to live void of God. Each day is the pursuit of things here and now with no thought about God or the eternal. We call this “practical” atheism, because most don’t realize that they live like God doesn’t exist. They would never openly deny God. In fact, many continue to go to church, but in everyday life, there are no prayers going Heavenward, there is no thought to the law of God and the ways of Heaven have left no impression

upon the hearts. So like the rich man, folks live for themselves. Selfish, material, greedy and close their eyes to the needs of those about them. The rich man may have been able to save Lazarus' life. He could have tried. He did nothing. He realized, too late, what a terrible life he had lived. He also knew that his brothers were marching step in step right behind him. Could it be that we are no different? Could it be that the hymns we sing, the Scriptures we read have not reached our hearts and made a significant change? We must consider that.

Second, I've often wonder what the rich man would do if he was granted one more day to live. What if he was allowed to return from the dead for one day and only one day, what would be different. I doubt that he would go to work and spend ten hours at his desk making one more day of profit. I doubt he would spend the day spending his wealth. Knowing what he had just experienced, I'd expect him to dash to each of his brother's houses, with the Bible tucked under his arm and talk seriously about God and where they were heading. He would tell them that all their "riches" don't matter in the next world. He would preach, beg and plead for them to bend their hearts to the God of Heaven. It was too late for him, but his brothers had opportunity. I think we could all see him doing something like that.

Here's the interesting thing. All we are given is one day-TODAY. We are not promised tomorrow, next week nor another twenty-five years. Only today is what we have. But I find too often that we live like we have all the time in the world. So we spend the day living like practical atheists, ignoring the immediate and the most important, for the trivial that doesn't matter. Now if you and I knew that today was our last day, we do things differently. I'd expect we'd go the day without TV - it really doesn't matter. All the texting, emailing, social networking would probably not be touched if we knew this was our last day. We'd think more about the Lord. We'd surround ourselves with our family. We'd pray like we have never prayed. We'd read Scripture, probably our story from Luke 16.

Today is all that we have. Someday, today will be our last day. There is a good chance that we won't know it is our last day. Sickness and disease may indicate that it's getting close, but even then, most do not know it's their last day. Today is all that we have. Today is it.

- Pray more-because today is all that we have
- Make meaningful conversation-touch lives, impact others, make a difference
- Think about the Lord and what He wants you to do
- End the day well. Make it productive. Make it good. If you are given another day tomorrow, use it wisely. Live it godly.

The rich man never realized that each day, he was one day closer to the end. We live with one foot in Heaven. We live knowing that today we are one day closer to Heaven.

Roger Shouse



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