



THE EXHORTER

“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)

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Jump Start # 1059

Luke 16:24 "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'"

Our verse today comes from the Lord's story of the rich man and Lazarus. It is a compelling account of how opposite things became after death. The rich man had every thing in life. In death, he was in agony and had no one to wait upon him. Lazarus was dumped at the rich man's gate and had no one who was compassionate for him in life. In death, he was comforted by Abraham.

This Scripture gives us a window into the next world. We wonder. What will it be like? What will we do? It doesn't answer every question, but it shows how we treat others, and how serious we are about God's law has an impact and a factor upon our destiny.

I find our verse today to be rich with irony. The rich man, in torment, was begging for Lazarus to come with a drop of water on his finger. That verbal image shows the depth of pain and torture that the rich man was experiencing. One drop of water isn't much. One drop wouldn't last long. One drop wouldn't change things. He didn't beg to change places. He didn't plead for a second chance. He doesn't seem to apologize for his empty heart. He doesn't ask for a barrel or water, nor even a cup of water. Just one drop. Just one. And of all the people, he asks for Lazarus to be the carrier of that one drop of water. He doesn't ask Abraham to come. Nothing is said about other greats such as Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David...He only asks for Lazarus. It is amazing that he knew the name of Lazarus. He seemed to completely ignore Lazarus when he was dying at his gate. He didn't seem to know and he definitely didn't seem to care. Where was the water for Lazarus when he was at the gate? Where was the mercy for Lazarus when he was in such need? Where were the crumbs? Where was help to keep the dogs away? Where was a blanket to keep warm? At the gate, sick, weak and worst of all, without hope or help, when it was just inside the house, is how Lazarus died.

(OVER)

The very things that the rich man wanted in death, he refused to give to Lazarus in life. He wanted someone to care. He wanted mercy. He wanted comfort. He wanted relief. The heart that shut Lazarus out, was now being shut out by God.

What a lesson for us! We can so easily walk in the footsteps of the rich man. No time for others. Don't want to get involved with others. Some have problems that are too complex and too messy. We close the door of our hearts, and our homes and simply do not think about others. Yet the time comes when we are in the same need. The need for time, but no one will give us any. The need for forgiveness, but no one will give it. The need for hope, but it's not there.

How tragic to be like the rich man. Surrounded with ways to help others but kept it all to himself. Jesus said, "To whom much is given, much is required." This is true with opportunities that are afforded to us.

- The opportunity to share the Gospel message of Jesus. There are so many ways to do that today. Do we keep the message closed up in the church building?
- The opportunity to be thankful to others and especially to God. Do we say it, or do we just assume everyone knows?
- The opportunities to encourage and build faith. There are so many great tools to help us learn, grow and become what God wants. Do we use those?

The rich man kept his gate closed to Lazarus. The rich man kept his heart closed to Lazarus. He had no time, use or concern for Lazarus, until death changed things. Then he needed Lazarus. Then he knew Lazarus by name. Then Lazarus was his friend. Selfish to the end, the rich man wasted the opportunity to make a difference in Lazarus' life.

Let us not be guilty of closing the gate of our hearts to others. Let us see that we need each other. Let us see how generous God is to us. Let us, as Paul pleaded with the Galatians, do good as we have opportunity. Let us, as Titus was told, be zealous for good works.

Open your eyes to those sitting in the church building. There are people all around that need help. Open your eyes to those in the neighborhood. Open your eyes to co-workers. Keep the gates open. Get to know the Lazarus' in your life. Do what you can.

The way you treat others, will be the way you are treated. The rich man found that out.

Roger Shouse

