

Lazarus

by Richard E. Bieber

To truly experience God's power, we must first love and serve those around us, especially the most vulnerable and needy, and let our love for them be the foundation of our desire for spiritual gifts.

Scripture: Luke 11:5-16, John 15:7, Romans 5:5

Topics: "Servant Leadership", "Godly Humility"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the importance of seeking power not for self-glorification but to serve others in need, drawing parallels to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. He emphasizes that true power from God comes when we humbly seek to minister to the lost, the poor, and the oppressed, relying solely on God's grace. Bieber challenges believers to examine how they are responding to the 'Lazarus' at their gate, stressing that love is the key to fulfilling God's call to serve those in need.

Transcript

There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table.

If we seek power for the sake of being able to say, "Look at us! We bear the authentic marks of the apostolic church! Look at the power!"

If we seek the power to heal and cast our demons,

- for the sake of keeping all the critics off our backs,

- for the sake of being able to say, "Look to yourself brother! We have the power of God around here,"

then all the power of heaven will do us little good. For our hearts are far from Christ.

On the other hand, if in our attempt to be faithful to our Lord we go out seeking the lost,

preaching the good news to the poor,

setting the captives free, and discover that we just don't have what it takes to bring God's healing grace to bear upon the troubled lives we meet, then we can turn to our Father and ask for the needed power and know that it will come.

Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey and I have nothing to set before him."

We have a friend. And we can go to him at midnight and ask, and receive. That God will pour out his power on a body of people who are committed to his Son, who truly want to minister his grace - of this there is no doubt.

There has never been a time, since the Church of Jesus Christ first came to birth, that the Son of God has failed to pour out his Spirit upon the saints who have cried to him for bread at midnight.

"If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it shall be done for you."

"If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

"When I sent you out with no purse or bag or sandals did you lack anything?"

"Nothing, Lord."

Jesus teaches us that when we go out there with nothing to rely on but his power, his power is there. At every point where we experience the power of God moving, it's when we're trusting nothing else.

But what if while we're praying for the power, and incidentally while we're feeding sumptuously everyday on God's word, and while we're clothed already in the purple and fine linen of manifold blessings from God, there's a beggar at our gate named Lazarus who isn't asking for something we don't have. He's asking for a few crumbs from the well-furnished table we do have. We're praying to God for more power while Lazarus is praying to us for a few crumbs from our table.

In each of our lives, without exception, there is a Lazarus. And the most important issue of our lives, the issue that will decide whether the mercy of God in the Lamb's blood will really avail for us on the other side of death is: what are we doing with our Lazarus?

When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, as each of us will, we may be inclined to point out to our Lord the mighty works we did in his name.

- Lord, we prophesied in your name,
we cast out demons in your name,
we did many mighty works in your name.

And he will answer,

"But what did you do with Lazarus?"

"Lazarus? Who's Lazarus? I never knew anyone named Lazarus."

Suddenly he will cause to come before our mind's eye the face of a man,
a woman, or even a child who reached out to us a thousand times.

Not for prophecy,

not for miracles,

not for profound teaching, but for a little love, just a few crumbs of material help.

Let's not talk about the five or ten people for whom we have responsibility. Let's talk about that one special person who now waits at the gate.

- It may be one of your children.

- You're running around doing work for the Lord and never hearing the cry that comes

from that neglected heart.

- It may be an old friend who's going through hard times.

- It may be someone at work who has, so far, attracted no more notice from you than a piece of furniture.

Maybe you don't "feel led" to do street work.

Maybe you don't have time to write a dozen letters a week. Maybe your schedule doesn't permit you to visit convalescent homes. But Lazarus is right there. You don't even have to go out looking for him.

- He's staring you in the face every day.

- Or he's calling you on the phone.

- Or perhaps God is causing the cry of his heart to reach your mind in some other

way.

"Wait a minute! I'm not sure who my Lazarus is. There are so many people, so many needs. I don't pass by just one beggar on my way home, I pass a hundred, a thousand. Which is my Lazarus? Which one among all the needy people is the one God has really put at my gate?"

Surely the God, who will bring Lazarus to our minds when we stand in judgment, will bring Lazarus to our minds now, if we pay attention.

There are several things we can be pretty sure of about our Lazarus, whoever he or she is. Like the beggar in our Lord's parable, he's probably poor. In other words, there is no way he or she can repay any favor we would do for him. He has nothing to offer that we need - not even gratitude or a smile - he may never join our church.

He's probably helpless. Lazarus wasn't standing at the rich man's gate, he was lying there, he was so weak. And this person whose heart is crying out to us isn't able to help himself.

Like so many old folks, and so many little ones, and so many sick people, and so many discouraged, beaten souls, they can't do for themselves - someone has to do for them.

He's unwanted by the world. Only the dogs come and lick his sores. Multitudes walk by him and don't even see him.

He hath no form nor comeliness, And When we shall see him

There is no beauty that we should desire him.

He is despised and rejected of men,

A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

And we hid as it were our faces from him.

He is hungry. Perhaps for food, maybe for some attention, or for a friend. Whatever it is that he is hungry for we have in abundance on our table. All he wants is a few crumbs.

And what does it take to minister to Lazarus? Power? Gifts of miracles and prophecy? No. It takes one thing: LOVE.

And don't say you don't have any love to give him. The love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. But, are we dwelling in that love?

God is love and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him.

And to dwell in love is not to wallow in some syrupy emotion, but to do something concrete for Lazarus.

- How much strength does it take to get up, go to our cupboard, and get a loaf of bread?
- What does it take to reach down into our pocket and give the woman some money for rent?
- Or to stop what we're doing for a little while and listen to the man's complaint?
- Or to drop by for a minute, or an hour, and see how that lonely old soul is doing?

How can our heavenly Father believe that our cries for power to cast out demons, and deliver the oppressed, come from hearts that care, when Lazarus still waits at our gate?

Step number one for this flock, and no doubt for all other assemblies who are crying to God for power to heal and deliver the oppressed souls that are coming to us in such numbers these days, is to begin with Lazarus.

God will bring to each of our minds one person who needs some of the good things that are already piled on our table. If each of us will concentrate during the coming week just on Lazarus,

- even if we have to let some of the more exotic ministries go,
- even if we have to miss Bible study or fellowship,
- even if some of the brothers and sisters misunderstand,

and give Lazarus the royal treatment in the name of Jesus, then God will know that we are trying to make love our aim and that our earnest desire for the spiritual gifts is built on that love.

We don't ascend into heaven to bring Christ down to us, or descend into the depths to raise him from the dead.

- God has already sent him down.

- God has already raised him up.

All we have to do is start loving that unloved person whom God has placed at our gate and we will meet our Lord Jesus, alive from the dead, in a new way.

In the despised and rejected Lazarus we will meet the despised and rejected and glorified Jesus afresh. Then the Spirit of the Lord will

- anoint us to preach good news to the poor,

- release to the captives,

- recovery of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty those who are oppressed.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/richard-e-bieber/lazarus/>

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