

LAZARUS, FORBEARANCE, AND REVIVAL

Excerpted from chapter 13... Set Our Hearts on Fire



One of the most difficult tests of revival comes in the form of a human visitor, who hardly looks like a messenger of God. In fact, the man is a disruption. How can we concentrate on the glories of heaven-sent revival, when this repulsive beggar parks his infectious body right outside our door?

"We'd like to help you, friend, but you've come at a bad time. Our prayer service is about to begin."

"All I'm asking for is a little food. Or maybe money for a cup of coffee."

"Here's five dollars. Wish it could be more. See you later." We breathe a sigh of relief as he walks away, but somehow we know that our prayer meeting is already off to a bad start.

Could it be that there is a connection between revival and this needy man?

We first meet Lazarus in a parable of Jesus, lying at the rich man's gate, covered with sores and yearning for a few scraps from the rich man's table. Only the dogs seem to care about this man, as they come and lick his sores. But heaven is watching over Lazarus. Lazarus dies, and a band of angels carries him to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also dies and finds himself in a place of anguish. Looking up toward heaven, the rich man sees Lazarus from afar, resting in the bosom of Abraham. Strange, during his earthly life, when Lazarus lay at his gate, the rich man never noticed him. But now he even remembers the beggar's name. "Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame" (Lk 16:24).

There was a time when Lazarus could have done much more than ease the rich man's pain. Lazarus could have been the doorway to the rich man's spiritual awakening. It was no accident that he lay begging at this particular gate. In the mysterious workings of God's mercy, Lazarus lay there as the rich man's hope.

Through Lazarus, God was offering the rich man a way to redeem his covetous soul.

Show Lazarus a little kindness, offer him a little relief from his suffering, and you are learning mercy, opening the door of your heart to receive the gift of grace.

How can a heart of stone receive grace?

Talk to Lazarus. Put some salve on those wounds, bring him some bread and wine to give him strength. Fill his empty pocket with a bit of money out of your abundance. The encouragement you give to Lazarus will multiply a thousand times over in your own heart, and you will begin to hear the voice of God once more.

The rich man was no heathen. He kept the Sabbath. He faithfully attended the synagogue and always journeyed to Jerusalem for the high holy days. But he saw no connection between his faith and this miserable beggar at his gate.

The rich man was blind.

He could not see that Lazarus was his link with the living God.

Welcome Lazarus, and you welcome the Messiah.

Reject Lazarus, and you have rejected the Messiah...

... no matter how fervent your prayers or eloquent your witness.

What's the Connection?

If there is a connection between revival and the appearance of Lazarus in our lives, it is one that is often hard to fathom.

Lazarus neither looks nor acts like a gift from God.

He is repulsive, disruptive, demanding, ungrateful, and he seems to have an intuitive sense of the most inopportune time to appear.

Sometimes Lazarus is bold enough to come in and worship with us. Before long we can see that we have a problem on our hands. This person sets everybody on edge. You never know what he or she is going to come out with. He can throw a meeting off balance in thirty seconds. And even when she sits and stares at the ceiling, she seems to drain the life out of us.

What can such a person possibly contribute to the revival among us?

Our encounter with Lazarus begins with the best of intentions. After all, revival has inspired us to rejoice in the Lord always – in all circumstances. We find ourselves praising God for the blue sky and the green grass, for the snow, and the wind and the rain beating against the window.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Our hearts open wide to people we formerly held at a distance. "Welcome, Lazarus! The Lord is so good! Come in and enjoy his goodness with us!"

But soon our generosity is challenged.

Lazarus begins to manifest his true nature. Instead of showing grateful appreciation for our kindness, he starts biting the hand that feeds him. He complains. He insults half the people at the potluck. And the Spirit reminds us that this is our opportunity to ***"let all men know your forbearance*** [the generous overlooking of insult or injury]."

We are being shown by the Lord that revival is not just ecstasy and joy, it is also forgiveness, forbearance, patience, faithfulness toward "difficult" people, as God has been faithful to us.

But where will it all lead? We seem to have a bull in our china shop that needs a tranquilizing bullet.

"No", says the Spirit, "you have a living soul in your midst for whom the Lamb's blood was shed as truly as it was shed for you".

How you treat this person has more to do than you may imagine with how the revival among you will progress.

"Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

Throughout our Lord's ministry there was always a Lazarus near him. By example, Jesus taught his disciples the importance of treating Lazarus with honor and love.

Each Lazarus was sent by God.

And each Lazarus who drew near to Jesus was a type, a foreshadowing, of a person whom we can expect to meet, as revival spreads among us.

We need to look very carefully at these "Lazaruses" who came to Jesus, and observe how Jesus treated each one.

For if Lazarus is not already among us, he soon will be.

He comes to us as a gift from God and is to be treated as such.



Message: Richard Bieber...excerpted from the book *Set Our Hearts on Fire*, Chapter 13 "Hello Lazarus" 1998.
Featured Art: Lazarus by Nigel Lawrence

Prayer: Lord, give us the insight to see each Lazarus in our midst as a precious gift from you. A gift to soften our hearts, a gift to grow our forbearance, our forgiveness, our patience, our mercy. Help us to draw close to you as we seek you in our weakness. Oh Lord, we confess that we need you in this. We repent for our hard hearts, our resentment, our lack of faith. Give us faith to trust you in these most difficult of situations. Instead of resentment, frustration and scorn... may mercy well up within our hearts and we truly become reflections of your patience and forgiveness. Maranatha Mirror

[Maranatha Mirror Messages](#)

mmirror.net

maranathamirror18@gmail.com