

Richard Hilgert Eulogy

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March 25, 2023

Lucy, Chris & (Adrienne), Alyssa & Phil, Kevin & (Claire), Gabriella & (Anton), RJ, Jensen, and Russel - We share your hope in our Lord and His comfort in your grief. Thank you for the opportunity to share our love for Richard together. May the Lord bless and keep you.

If a Eulogy is a commendation of the character and services of a person, I believe someone like Rich would expect his Eulogy to include the evidence of Jesus's work in his life. There will rightly be much discussion about Rich and who he has been in our lives. But now, let's consider Who Jesus is in Rich's life and why it matters.

A Eulogy can be an occasion to testify, to examine, to consider and to challenge. See this person's life, look for the evidences of Christ's work in him, taste and see that the Lord is good, give an opportunity and reason to answer Father God's command to "Listen to and obey His Son" unto repentance and Salvation.

I'd like to tell you a bit about how I know Richard.

A close group of us gather for a couple of hours each Saturday morning to discuss life in the Word, and the Word's direction for our lives. The Holy Spirit always provides something to unpack from the Word of God.

We want to be as the Bereans, those Jews who in **Acts 17:11** "*...received the Word (from the Apostle Paul) with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.*"

What does God think about our lives? How do we order our lives in accord with His Word? How do we have His mind? What would Jesus do? These are the type of the things we've discussed together through the years.

We nurture a close trust and we share the details of our week as we've pondered

and experienced God, where we've seen God leave behind His wake, and what's on each man's heart. We, with Rich, are Berean Brothers.

I want to report to you, to testify to what I've seen of Rich and the evidence of Jesus in his life.

I do this to give witness to Jesus, and to convey hope to you. I don't speak about Rich in the past tense, but the present tense. Do you know why? It's because our faith informs us that while Rich's body has died, his eternal soul has not. It cannot. That is how God has made all of us - with a soul that is eternal.

Listen to the Apostle Paul's assurance in **2 Cor 5:8** "***We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.***" Our faith informs us that Rich's soul, the eternal seat of his person, is now **with** Jesus because of his faith and trust **in** Jesus.

I'd like to share an example of another Jesus-filled person who faced death.

Our group recently discussed a 2nd century Church father named Polycarp. He was a disciple of the Apostle John, and the Bishop of the Church of Smyrna. Hunted down by Rome, his captors found him and he welcomed them inside to eat while he prayed, before being taken to die publicly and brutally in an arena. They entreated him to embrace Caesar as God and deny Jesus, to escape a horrible death so late in his life. Polycarp's response is recorded as "*86 years have I have served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?*" With that, they murdered him.

Christianity has scores of reports of how followers of Jesus have faced death. The deaths of hundreds of Christians throughout history are detailed in Foxe's Book of the Martyrs. While the courageous response of these Christians is remarkable, I believe the book is actually more about the evidence of their spectacular faith shown through their actions. We are not to marvel so much at the martyrs' courage, but in the manifold evidence of Jesus **in** them, the product of His Work being shown **through** them. The courage these people exercised was their unflappable trust in Jesus; it was God's gift.

So, why is faith so important, and what role should it play in our lives?

Our faith, which doesn't come from ourselves but is a gift from God, is not meant to be lived in a vacuum. **"...Faith without works (actions) is useless..." (James 2:20)**. Our actions are actually the product of the work of Jesus, Who is **"...the author and finisher of our faith..." (Heb 12:2)**

We are called to cooperate in the faith He gives us and nurtures in us. So, let's consider the evidence of Jesus in Rich's life and ask how we could also Walk with the same Jesus - the Author, the Cultivator, the Protector of our faith.

Rich was a sinner, hopeless, but for the cleansing Blood of the Lamb. Up through the end of his time here with us, he continued to strive as **Col 3:9-10** says to **"...put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him"**.

What we witnessed was the response of Rich and his family in the face of a rapidly developing disease ending in his body's death. How a person faces death, and how those around him respond, can offer a window into the heart, for Jesus explained that **"...those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart..." (Matt 15:18)**

So, how did we see the effect of Rich's faith in Jesus?

Just a few short months ago, Rich arrived to breakfast with an oxygen tank and a new concern. This was the beginning of a rapid journey, and what we saw through it was evidence of his faith in his Lord.

It began with the shocking diagnosis and what it might mean, and Rich quickly shifted to his response as he understood what may lay ahead in transplant recovery or death.

We saw his response as the disease progressed faster than we expected, and his openness to candid discussions about his circumstance and emotions.

We saw the love shared with his family as he found comfort and joy in their response, in their Walk with Jesus.

Now, Rich too had fears and anxiety. Towards the latter part of this journey, when I asked him how he was feeling emotionally, he told us that he was conscious that every breath was a task, and realized just how great the smallest graces from God actually are. I was later told that when faced with anxiety, Rich responded by singing hymns in Praise for comfort.

My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

We finally saw his faith as he had peace even in the hours before he was taken to surgery. Rich responded to Jesus' care as he knew Him through the Bible and through his experience. Richard was assured of His Savior.

These responses point to another reason for our hope and faith.

We understand that faith must be informed and be based on truth, because faith in anything but God's truth is just folly; it's just wishful thinking. God's truth about Himself and His intentions towards us are reliable. And so, I encourage those belonging to Jesus to take heart. Richard, who we love, now experiences what we here currently hold among God's promises:

We can trust that Rich has joined the "***great cloud of witnesses***" in Heaven who surround us. (**Heb 12:1**) These witnesses are those who are forgiven in Jesus who have gone before us, already waiting in fellowship together.

We know that "***...neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate (Rich) from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.***" (**Rom 8:38-39**). In both life and death, believers are comforted and received by Jesus, and nothing can separate us from Him. Likewise, **Rom 14:8** tells us "***...for if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.***" Rich always seemed to strive to live according to the truth.

Rich also believed along with the Apostle Paul who wrote ***“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Phil 1:21)***, as well as ***“...in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.” (2 Tim 4:8)***

Why did Rich have hope? What promise from Jesus would be a basis of his faith in Jesus?

Perhaps it was Jesus’ words in the Gospel of John: ***“... “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”*** Jesus obviously didn’t mean that Rich’s body would not die, but that Rich’s soul would reside with Jesus, ***“...not the lake of fire. This is the second death...” (Rev 20:14)***

The Bible reads ***“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Heb 11:1)*** This faith in Jesus that Saves us, the faith that the Apostle Paul wrote about, the faith believers like Rich enjoy, offers us a view into God and the spiritual realm that is very much present that we cannot see. Paul likened it to making out some of the details while peering into a dim mirror or glass.

In the presence of Jesus, now that these things are seen, Rich’s faith is fully realized as he sees Jesus face to Face. While here, Rich knew Jesus dimly, but now Rich knows Jesus fully, as Jesus has always known him. **(1 Cor 13:12)**

So how does our faith in the realities of Jesus help us when someone we love - who belongs to Jesus - has died?

Consider this: Is there Joy on Easter morning for the person who loves Jesus? Why? Is it not the joy of Jesus overcoming Death and living again?

Does the reason for that joy, His defeat of death, also offer believers reason for that same Joy? Shouldn’t that Joy also be for those who belong to Jesus, who proceed us?

Our faith informs us that Richard, his eternal soul, is in the presence of our Lord even now. Jesus lives, and He has provided that Richard lives, with Him, as well.

And in this, Jesus also comforts us.

Someone might be wondering: How does Jesus feel when someone He loves dies?

Do you know what I think is the shortest yet perhaps the most telling verse of the Bible? I believe it is **John 11:35**, "**Jesus wept.**" But what does this say about Jesus, and how does this assure us a measure of comfort?

Jesus arrived four days after His friend Lazarus had died. Lazarus' family and friends were greatly distressed not only in his death, but that Jesus had allowed it to happen. Lazarus' sisters had sent word to Jesus of his sickness, and upon His delayed arrival Martha even said to Him "**Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.**"

There was much sorrow everywhere, and Jesus felt the pain in their loss. He also felt the dismay of those He loved in that they knew He could have prevented it. But in obedience to Father's greater purpose, Jesus allowed Lazarus to die. The Bible tells us that when Lazarus' sisters sent word to Jesus, He said "**This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.**" (John 11:4). Jesus knew that His friend Lazarus would be revived, even only to die again, and then to meet Him again in Heaven, because Lazarus believed Jesus when He said "**I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**" (John 14:6)

Richard has believed as did Lazarus, and has now met Jesus face to face. But Jesus also understands the pain of death felt by those left behind. Jesus weeps with us, He comforts us, and He rejoices with those who believe Him. His Holy Spirit, the Comforter, is here among us even now.

You see, we have very, very good reason for our hope. (1 Pet 3:5)

Hope in forgiveness and rescue through Jesus; Hope in a Jesus Who understands and loves us; Hope in a genuine relationship with our living God; and yes, a defensible hope that our beloved Richard is with Jesus now, awaiting the rest of us who know Jesus.

Yes, we can have comfort in Jesus!

Do we believe God's Word, the Bible? Does our faith inform us we will see Rich again if we personally know Jesus? Do you have faith that informs you that you personally know Jesus? That His Comfort is here for us even now?

Are you a believer, a follower of Christ? Be encouraged, be comforted. Are you not? Hear His offer of forgiveness, believe, and join us, join Richard, be joined to Jesus.

Kid's Church

Socrates: "I cannot teach anybody anything. I can only make them think."

PRAYER: I thank you Father, we all thank you, for Richard in our lives, and Yours in his. We thank you that our faith assures us he has been gathered up to you, Jesus. We praise You Jesus for the manifold and tangible evidence of Your Work in Richard's life. We praise you for the impact You've made on Richard, and in turn made on us. We worship You for Your incredibly kind offer to belong to You. Please Lord, have mercy and bring us all to heed Your Call to put our faith in Jesus.