

Here Comes the Sun-Day
A Sermon for Pilgrim Congregational Church, UCC, Lexington
Rev. Reebee Kavich Girash
September 21, 2025
(Third Act's US Sun-Day Celebration)

Luke 16:19-31

19 “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. **20** And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, **21** who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. **22** The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham.^[a] The rich man also died and was buried. **23** In Hades, where he was being tormented, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.^[b] **24** He called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames.’ **25** But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things and Lazarus in like manner evil things, but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. **26** Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’ **27** He said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house— **28** for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.’ **29** Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’ **30** He said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ **31** He said to

him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.' "

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This morning's text is a parable, Jesus' classic sermon illustration, that probably challenged his contemporaries as much as it challenges us. Many parables are hyperbolic and pushy and designed to make us squirm. This morning's parable challenges us to wrestle with nothing less than wealth and poverty. It's a challenge to us as purple cloth folks but it is also a challenge to the wider community, then and now.

Our parable *seems* to end without hope. It is too late for the rich man, he had his chance. It is too late for his family, they received the same teaching and they didn't listen either. *But Jesus' parables are never without hope.* The point of this one, I think, is two fold. First, to be so jarring that anyone in that rich man category - those with power and privilege - will wake up to the warning and not be too late.

As John Carroll writes, "It is too late for the rich man, and there appears to be no hope for the rest of his family...In this fictional narrative, Jesus invites listeners to examine their own life choices and actions in light of the reality that we have limited time in which to live well...It is not too late for us: Not too late to pay attention to the needs around us. Not too late to share what we have to help others flourish. Not too late to challenge business practices and economic systems that allow a few to enjoy massive wealth while others experience unrelieved, crushing poverty. The work of this parable isn't finished until we answer the question: How will we respond?"¹

¹ <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-26-3/commentary-on-luke-1619-31-10>

The hope comes in being asked again and again.

The second point of this parable is to be so jarring that anyone in the poor Lazarus category will wake up to being seen, named, loved by God. That folks in the poor Lazarus category will have a new glimmer of hope.

And there is hope. Even when the stakes are high, the situation existentially threatening, there is hope. Sometimes we have to choose to hope, it doesn't just appear in front of us. But there is hope.

There are situations our world faces right now that can seem hopeless - one such challenge is climate change. But we can choose active hope. We can hear the lesson, and build a new future.

I've spoken often of the framework of Buddhists' Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone in their book *Active Hope*, in which they talk about climate change. They talk about the power of vision, and the power of the story we tell of the present and future.

They describe three great stories that people tell:

The first is Business as Usual. Everything's fine, our climate is just fine, and there's no reason to change the way we live. Pay no attention to anyone else's problems.

The second story is the Great Unraveling. It's the story of inevitable catastrophe. That's just the way things are. (This is the end of the rich man's story. You had your chance.)

But Macy says that a third and radically different story should be our story. "The third story is held and embodied by those who know the

first story is leading us to catastrophe and who refuse to let the second story have the last word. Involving the emergence of new and creative human responses...a life-sustaining society committed to the healing and recovery of our world. We call this story the Great Turning. The central plot is finding and offering our gift of active hope.”² And she goes on to say that it really and truly matters which story we live into, which story our lives express. To have the future we yearn for, we need to live into that story as we write it.

In other words, we choose to wake up. We choose to receive the lesson while there is still time, we choose to be part of active *hope* in the future.

Bill McKibben, writing in possibly the most hopeful book written in the US this year, wants us to know something about solar power. Now, he’s a journalist, not a preacher - though he does teach Sunday School up in Vermont. He’s not teaching in parables - I think he’s trying to teach in measured and hopeful tones. He’s a journalist, steeped in science and climate action, and he wrote this somewhere around April 2025 in his book *Here Comes the Sun*:

“...[Now], quite suddenly, we’re learning not to burn those fossil fuels, and to rely instead on the large ball of flaming gas that hangs 93 million miles distant in the sky. We are on the verge of realizing that the sun, which already provides us light and warmth and photosynthesis, is also willing to provide us the power we need to run our lives... It won't happen automatically, and I don't know if we will do it, at least in the short window physics is giving us to deal with climate change.....but I am convinced it could happen and certain that it should. In a world where almost everything seems to be going wrong,

² *Active Hope*, p. 5

this is the one big thing suddenly going right. I'm willing to fight for it, and I hope you will be, too."³

To me, the acceleration of solar energy around the world is like the reversal of the ending of this morning's parable. I cling to the hope that humanity as a whole is moving away from fossil fuels. I cling to the idea that we still can save human civilization and this beautiful world that God has created. In other words I cling to the hope that people have listened to Moses and Abraham, to the prophets ancient and modern, to Jesus and the other teachers. That people are listening.

Now Bill McKibben and others have pointed out that the US is no longer leading on the renewable energy transition. In terms of Macy's narratives, the elected leadership of the US has declared that everything is fine with fossil fuel use and has even doubled down on them. But...both the US economy, and governments around the world including China, are moving towards renewable energy, fast.⁴ "China has dropped pollution levels faster than any place on earth."⁵ The world is moving away from fossil fuels and toward renewables. The question is, is the world moving fast enough?

I am tremendously proud of this congregation. A few years ago we made a choice together: to invest our resources in rooftop solar panels. Dozens of us pledged to this project. At the time we knew it was a bit of a gamble, in terms of finances - but we felt optimistic the payoff would come both in terms of living into our values and in terms of finances. The implementation has been challenging - so please say thank you to Dave, Duncan and Susan F when you see them because they are still working on the finance part which involves herding two

³ Here Comes the Sun, p. 2

⁴ See especially chapter 5 of *Here Comes the Sun*.

⁵ P. 117

government agencies, a contractor, and a utility. On the other hand, have you seen the power we're generating?

Environmental Benefits



Our rooftop solar is a shining and clear example of our commitment to address climate change, for the sake of Creation, for the benefit of our neighbors here and around the world. We are part of the shift toward renewable energy that McKibben talks about.

Someone from Lexington posted this factoid recently:

Time for the world to install a gigawatt of solar power capacity

2004: A year

2010: A month

2015: A week

2023: A day

2025: Twelve hours⁶

You might be wondering how this has anything to do with a parable about poverty and wealth. Addressing climate change has always been about human wellbeing, because pollution always concentrates in the most vulnerable communities. And the poor are the first to feel

⁶ Posted by Mark Sandeen on the LexCan / LifeAction email list this week

the effects of climate change, and the least able to adapt to it. Addressing climate change is this parable writ globally.

Bill McKibben, our hometown hero, finishes *Here Comes the Sun* with these words: “I end this book...saddened by all that has happened in the last 40 years, and by all that we haven't done. But I also end it exhilarated. Convinced that we've been given one last chance. Not to stop global warming (too late for that) but perhaps to stop it short of the place where it makes civilization impossible. And a chance to restart that civilization on saner ground, once we've extinguished the fires that now both power and threaten it.”⁷

Let's wake up, dance in the sunshine, choose hope. And let's live into the story of the Great Turning, through our actions. Amen.

⁷ p.208