



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 #283

Luke 14:26-*“if anyone comes to me, and does not hate his own father, and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”*

We are taking a look at the radical statements of Jesus. These are shocking but revealing. Our verse for today is found in a section about counting the cost of discipleship. Three times in this section Jesus states, “cannot be my disciple.” The tone is not what we’d expect from Jesus. It is certainly not the message presented in many churches today. You’d think Jesus would want as many followers as possible. You’d think he would be happy that anyone would sign on board. Instead, this section comes across as Jesus refusing people. It starts with relationships. That is what our verse is about today. Any relationships that come before Jesus are unacceptable. We’ll come back to this thought soon. The context also states that anyone who does not carry his own cross cannot be his disciple. Wow! Demanding. Those statements would eliminate many people. Jesus is not interested in Sunday Christians, he wants disciples. Those that will follow him and put him before all things, literally!

At the end of this section, Jesus gives two illustrations. One is of a king going into battle. Before the trumpets blow and the soldiers march, the king must decide whether or not he has enough soldiers to win the battle. If not, it’s a suicide mission. He’d lose and the kingdom would be taken over. If he doesn’t have enough soldiers he will call for peace by surrendering. The other illustration is of a man who is going to build a tower. He starts, but quickly runs out of money. The tower sits unfinished, and useless. Neighbors talk. Tongues wag. He becomes the laughing stock of the community. In both illustrations there is a first. First, you count the cost. First you number the soldiers. You see if you have enough to stay with it until the end. You want to finish what you have started. That’s the tone and thought here. There is a cost to discipleship.

(OVER)

Those illustrations compliment the radical statements of Jesus. It does little good to start following Jesus and then family calls. They cry that you don't drop everything and come right over. They need you for this. They want that. There is a wedding. There is a reunion. There is a holiday gathering. There is always something. The tug and pulls of family can conflict with walking with Jesus. Family or church services? Do you really need to think about that one?

Jesus sent his apostles out into all the world to make disciples (Matt. 28:19). A disciple is more than someone who goes to church. He is a pupil, a student, he is being mentored, he is an apprentice. He must be around the master to learn. He must watch. He must listen. He must ask questions. He must practice. He is learning to become like the master. Here, Jesus is the master and we are the disciples. This is a commitment of time, responsibility, and heart. Just thinking about Jesus now and then won't do it. Just going to church services when you feel like it, doesn't cut the grade.

Throughout this section Jesus says, if you cannot do, then you cannot become. Serious things to think about. This is not for those who have not thought about it. Christianity is a commitment of your all. The greatest commandment is to love the Lord with all your heart, all of your mind, and all of your soul. After you've given all, there is nothing left. What if I am not ready for that level? What if I can't put Jesus before my family? What if I just want to follow, but not too closely? What then? Can I be a "junior disciple?" Can I be a "disciple second class?" I want to go to heaven, but not the way he is saying. Is that OK?

What do you think? Do you see a problem in those questions? There is too much of self. Before we can love with our all, we must deny ourselves. No more, what do I think or what do I want. What does God want? What does Jesus say? You might think, "that sounds like slavery." It sure does. Now you are starting to get it. Remember Paul calling himself a "bond servant of Christ?" Or, as the Romans were told, "slaves of righteousness." (Rom. 6:18) Remember Paul saying "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2:20) Paul said that he had crucified self. We want to keep our self alive and just move Christ in. That gets too crowded. It won't work. There will be a conflict in your heart. Christ will leave. He will not settle for the runner up award in your heart. He's first. He's before all things. His way trumps all ways. He is the Lord.

So this means, "what the bible says," comes before what I want and what I say. God first, in all things.

Cannot be my disciple...what shocking words those are. Can you surrender all for Christ? Are you ready to sign the title of your heart over to him? Have you counted what it will cost? The rewards are worth it. Those that have done so, have no regrets. It's not easy. Not everyone understands. But you know it is the right thing to do!

Roger Shouse

