



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)

July 29, 2012

JUMP START #285

Matt 7:21- “Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in Heaven will enter.”

When we look at the radical statements of Jesus, we notice that there were many, not just one or two. Jesus wasn't going along with the status quo, but defining something that the first century world had not seen and that was a complete dedication to the will of God. No more pretending. No more double standards. And no more taking advantage of people. That is what the religious landscape looked like when Jesus came. His radical statements made the disciples develop a true and genuine faith in God that would affect all areas of their life.

Our verse today comes from near the end of the Sermon on the mount. It emphasizes doing what God wills as opposed to what man wants to do. Our way verses God's way, that has long been a battle. God's way wins every time.

The scene is the judgment. The following verse Jesus says, “Many will say to me on that day...” what day? Most likely, the final day, the day of judgment. There is a sense of shock and surprise by these people. They can't believe that they are not going to be in Heaven. It is not that they didn't know God. They acknowledge Jesus as Lord. Twice, showing their astonishment, they cry “Lord, Lord.” They were amazed that they hadn't pleased God. They plead their case by declaring, “In your name” we prophesied, cast out demons and did many miracles. That's their proof. Because of these things they felt that they should be in Heaven. Look what we have done. We did it for you.

Twice Jesus declares the problem. In verse 21, it is apparent that they did not do the will of the Father. In verse 23, Jesus declared that they practiced lawlessness. Not doing what God wants is lawlessness. That word means without law. God is the law. They were flying through life as if God had no law, doing what they wanted to do.

All of this presents to us a couple of powerful lessons to consider.

First, not everyone who thinks they ought to be in Heaven will be. This passage shows that. Have you ever noticed that everyone wants to go to Heaven, but so few seem to be doing anything about that. You'd think that they would want to learn about Heaven by reading the Bible, or set about trying to find out how to get there, but they don't. They just busy themselves living today as if that will never end. In Jesus' story, the people there were not “bad people.” They were religious. They seemed to be doing

good things. From this passage we see the importance of doing God's will. Paul told the Ephesians to not be ignorant but to "understand the will of God." (Eph. 5:17) God has a plan for you. God has designed and described what he wants. Just being nice, neighborly, isn't the same as being righteous. It's hard for us to imagine that the sweet grandma who lives down the street may not go to Heaven. That just doesn't fit into our thinking. Why should she go? Because she is old? Because she makes cookies for the grandkids? Because she is nice? We have accepted the idea that everyone who is nice and good, will be in Heaven. It seems to me that these people in Jesus' story were nice. They were definitely busy doing good things. Prophesying is a good thing, if God directs it. Casting out demons is awesome, if God's will leads to that. Doing many miracles is wonderful, if that's God's will. The apostles did all of these things. They did it because it was God's will. These people were not following God's will. There will be no one in Heaven who made it their own way. Sinatra's "My Way," may have sold many records, but it doesn't move God. Heaven is for those who follow God, God's way.

The second lesson here is that not all religious activity impresses God. These people were busy doing religious things. That did nothing for God. So it's not a matter of you finding a way to serve God in the way you like, NO. It's a matter of you following the will of God. These religious activities in Jesus' story were considered "lawlessness." They were wrong. They were breaking the law of God. Today, the modern church has found that if you put the word "ministry" behind something, they think it makes it right, proper and a function of the church. So a guy could have a Tree "ministry," or a bicycle "ministry," or a miracle "ministry." This has a religious sound to it. The church can fund it and you get to do what your talents and heart feel like. What a wonderful world. Until "THAT DAY," when you stand before Christ and he throws all that "ministry" stuff away and asks you, "Why didn't you do the will of my Father? Where do all these "ministries" come from? Not the Bible. So, here we are at the major crossroads, are you going to do as the Bible says, or are you going to strike out on your own religiously and do what is your will? God's will or your will? God's way or your way? Who do you think will win? We know. God.

What we learn is that God doesn't want you to be original, different, unique, progressive, or cutting edge. Not that way. He wants you to be faithful, dedicated, obedient, following and doing what he wants. I was in a golf shop once. A man was returning a golf club. I asked him why he didn't like it? Thought I would get some tips. He gave me a big one. He bought the club for his wife's birthday. I said, "she didn't like it?" He said, "She doesn't golf." Wow. I'm amazed she didn't use it on him. Do you see the parallel with God? We do things for God thinking he will like it and he doesn't. He has told us what he likes, it is in the New Testament. Do his will.

Radical? Yes. Doable? Certainly!

Roger Shouse

