



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 #280

Luke 12:20- “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’”

Our verse today comes from the parable of the rich farmer. He was successful in many ways. The story begins by telling us that “he was very productive.” He had such a large harvest that he had no place to store his crops. He comes up with a plan. He’ll tear down his current barns and build larger barns. He then reasons, “I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat drink and be merry.’” His life was all planned out. Everything was set. Retirement was on the horizon. He had positioned himself well. Except, all of his plans necessitated that he be alive. His life surrounded the present and not the eternal. God called him that night. He died. He had prepared his fields, barns, and retirement, but not his eternity with God. Preachers often point out the number of times the rich farmer refers to himself—“this is what I will do;” “my crops;” “my barns;” “my grain;” “my soul.” The word “I” is used 6 times and the word “my” is used 5 times. All this in four sentences. He sure liked to talk about himself.

Jesus told this story to answer a request. Someone wanted Jesus to settle a family inheritance problem. Grown kids and inheritance—a recipe for a good old fashioned squabble and fight. Jesus wouldn’t get into that. He was not the “law of the land,” first of all. More than that, he didn’t come for that reason. Had he gotten in the middle of that dispute, he would have opened the door for every land issue, neighbor problems, and people complaining that someone’s dog bit him. The mission of Jesus would have been greatly derailed. He knew that. Instead of jumping in the inheritance battle, he tells the story of the rich farmer.

The parable ends with this principle, “So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” That’s the point. That’s the main point of just about all that Jesus taught. That’s the point that most miss today. The newspapers, the TV commentators, talk radio are all concerned about the massive debt this country is in. If nothing changes, we’re on a course of bankruptcy, they tell us. I’m not an economist, balancing the checkbook and running the household budget baffles me some days, but more alarming than all of this, is the bankruptcy toward God. How many are just like this rich farmer? They have zero in their God account. They’re busted and broke spiritually, and worse, they don’t know it.

What is Jesus talking about? He’s not talking about earning Heaven, because we can’t do that. He’s not implying a giant balance in the sky and as long as the good side has more than the bad side, we’ll be OK.

No. All sin, any sin, one sin is deadly. Just ask Adam and Eve. Just ask Lot's wife. Jesus is talking about a life that includes God. The rich farmer was stuck on himself. His plans included tomorrow. But he does not control tomorrow. He was not given a tomorrow. Our passage says, "THIS VERY NIGHT." This reminds me of a neighbor who baked a cake for a shut in. The gift was so well received that she decided to bake another cake the following week. This continued on for several weeks until one day the lady stopped. She didn't bake a cake. Her shut in neighbor called and bitterly complained, "Where's my cake?" We are so used to having tomorrow that we almost demand it. Each day is a gift from God.

Being rich towards God includes a life that is thankful for each day. It is a life that includes God in the plans. James teaches us to say, "If God wills..." We are not in control, God is. Being rich in God means having a life that reflects God. Such a person is obedient to God. They consider what their decisions would do to the glory of God or their relationship with God. One who is rich toward God reflects the spirit and attitude of God. Compassion, kindness, generous, thoughtful—these are a few of the characteristics of a heart that is rich toward God.

Some have suggested that the farmer should have given extra grain to neighbors, possibly. What about the poor? Possibly. But more than that, here is a person who is busy, his schedule is full and his dreams involve everything but God. He thinks if he can get the new barns built, then he can sit back, take it easy and everything is set. Life is not defined by the car that you drive, the brand name of clothes you wear, but your relationship with God.

He died. He had nothing in his God account. God didn't cross his radar. God wasn't in his plans, schedule nor heart. All his barns went to someone else. His crops? Someone else got them. His house, his stuff—all gone. All he carried with him across death was an empty soul. It makes you think doesn't it? Sometimes we get too wrapped up in stuff and trying to be somebody and forgetting the most important one, and that is God.

You need God. You need him today. You need him in your plans, your schedule, your home and mostly in your heart. You need to talk to God, today. You need to remember God, today. You need to thank God, today. You need to walk with God, today. You need that because you may not have a tomorrow. The rich farmer didn't. You may not finish school. You may not get married. You may not retire. You may not build those barns you need. You may not.....but if you are rich in God, it's OK. If notwell, you know the outcome.

Today! Not tomorrow. Today. Rich toward God, today!

Roger Shouse

