



# THE EXHORTER

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***“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](http://prchurchofchrist.org))

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## JUMP START # 498

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**Mark 8:16- “ They began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread.”**

Our passage today shows how the disciples so often were not on the same page as Jesus and how the journey of faith is hindered by the physical. Jesus was warning the disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees. The expression, “leaven of the Pharisees” meant their influence. Just as leaven spreads through dough and makes bread rise, the leaven of the Pharisees was a corrupt influence that led to false ideas about God. On another occasion Jesus was warning again about the leaven of the Pharisees when he was interrupted by someone wanting Jesus to settle a family dispute about money and inheritances.

While Jesus is warning, the disciples are worrying. Jesus is talking spiritual and the disciples are talking about lunch. Jesus is instructing about influence and the disciples are discussing the physical. How this must have made Jesus weary with those men. He must have thought, “Will they ever get it?”

Jesus reminds them how he fed the 5,000 and how much extra they had and on another occasion he fed 4,000 and again, they had baskets full of extra. Jesus always took care of them. They never squeaked by or barely had enough, with Jesus, the blessings overflowed. Do they not think that Jesus could feed them, only twelve disciples after he has fed thousands?

So often the here and now, the physical stands in the way of the spiritual. We are dual creatures, both physical and spiritual and the physical is what is visible to us and it is the realm that seems to dominate. Our jobs, our finances, the weather, our health, even our moods so often stand in the way of the spiritual.

This story from Mark seems so ridiculous but I see myself there as well. Concern about lunch dominates the mind and seems to be the most pressing issue at the moment. It wasn't. Most can skip one meal. Jesus would take care of them, he always had in the past. Yet, the growling belly can close the ears to the spiritual lessons.

That seems so shallow, but we know that's the way it is. When we are that way, it seems the need for bread becomes our obsession. It's interesting that apparently all the disciples were in this discussion about lunch. No one said, “Hush, I can't hear Jesus,” or “we'll talk about this when he is finished.” No, the hungry bellies seemed to be the topic of the hour.

This bothers me from two standpoints. First, I know as a preacher, that when I am preaching, some are discussing bread. It may be the plans they have after church. It may be trying to figure out what more they have to do for the holidays. It may be wondering if they are going to get a bonus this year. It may

be planning next year's vacation. It may be where we are going for lunch. That bothers me. I guess it shouldn't because the disciples did it to Jesus and no one preaches better than Jesus did.

Secondly, it bothers me because I have done this myself. The mind wanders and it doesn't pay attention and it tends to settle upon the lunch type of topics-the here and now kind of things. Been there done that and not proud of that.

Jesus didn't give up on these disciples. He stayed with it. They eventually got it and would find themselves in the role of teaching like Jesus was doing to them. That is the same lesson for us. Jesus stays with us. He's patient. He wants you to be spiritually minded. He wants you to see things as he sees them.

Hungry bellies are no match for hungry souls. The belly can be taken care of so easily, the soul needs more attention. All of us must be reminded of this. We are more than physical. We have a soul that needs to be fed and a soul that longs for God. Some seem to have forgotten. They live for the physical and act as if they have no soul. Their conversations and their zest in life is only for the physical things. They get excited about the physical. They long for the physical. The physical brings them much Joy. They have lived this way for so long that they have stuffed their soul away so deeply that they don't even realize that they have a soul. It is not until they are forced to go to the funeral home and for a brief few minutes they wonder if there is life after death and if there is a Heaven, surely it includes football, food, shopping and all the physical life that they enjoy now. Even their Heaven is an extension of the physical world.

This is not the way it is with the followers of Christ. Their souls, the spiritual, is as much a part of their life as the physical. They think about the spiritual. They think about how things will affect their souls and the consequences things have to their souls. Followers of Jesus are interested in growing spiritually. They enjoy discussions about spiritual things. They find satisfaction in Bible classes and sermons. They want to know more about Jesus. And, not surprisingly, the followers of Jesus, tend to live a calmer, more peaceful life and they tend to be more thoughtful of others, kind hearted, and generous-and the reason is that they have grown in the spirit and have seen Jesus through the Gospels.

During the second and third centuries there arose a philosophy called Gnosticism that affected many Christians. It was based upon knowledge and the belief that the physical part of life had no impact upon the spiritual side of life. This weird belief led to all kinds of false ideas, even about who Jesus was, but at the heart of all of this was a disconnect between the soul and the body. They missed it. The body and soul are connected. One affects the other. Living as if you have no soul is not wise. Living as if one does not affect the other isn't wise either.

We are both. We must pay attention to both. But when it comes to lunch or listening to Jesus, the spiritual side trumps every time. It is the spiritual that lives on. It is the spiritual that goes to Heaven.

Roger Shouse

