



# 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)

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## JUMP START #271

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***Luke 19:45,46- “ And he entered the Temple and began to cast out those who were selling, saying to them, ‘It is written, and my house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a robbers den.’”***

Our verse today finds Jesus in Jerusalem, in the temple. This was shortly before his arrest and trial. Jesus cast out the money changers. This was the second time Jesus did this. Every male Jew was required to go to the Temple for the feast days. During that time, sacrifices would be offered by the priests. As the Jews scattered away from Jerusalem, two necessities developed. First, for those who lived far away and had to travel great distances, it was not practical to bring lambs for the sacrifices. Local shepherds would sell lambs to the priests, who would sell them to those who arrived without sacrifices. Secondly, only Jewish coins were accepted in the Temple offerings. Those from other places had Roman coins. Money changers, or more accurately, “Exchangers” would set up in the Temple area where people could change their Roman coins for the proper Jewish coins.

Now, all of this seems like a rather nice and good solution to helping those from other places. It is in theory. But what happened, the local Jews, and particularly the priests, took advantage of the situation by inflating the prices and making huge profits off the people. The occasion to worship God became a time to rob their fellow Jews and put them in a situation in which they had no other option but to pay the high prices.

The spirit of sacrifice and worship was ruined by the greed of the local Jews. In tossing them out, Jesus referred to two O.T. passages. **Isa. 56:7** refers to “My house of prayer,” and **Jer. 7:11** refers to the house becoming a “den of robbers.”

We find Jesus going to God’s word. He did that often. When Satan tempted him, Jesus went to the word. When questioned about divorce, Jesus went to the word. When asked about the resurrection he appealed to the word. Here in this passage he says, “It is written...” Jesus was a man who knew the word of God, lived according to the word of God, and relied upon the word of God. This is a good lesson for us. There is an old saying that states, “The Bible that is falling apart belongs to the person whose life is not falling apart.” I wonder if we have become satisfied with vague and general concepts about the Bible and are not bothered by our inability to state, “It is written.” Often, folks substitute, “Here’s what I think,” or “Here’s how I see it,” instead of “It is written.” Becoming a “It is written” people means we spend time knowing, reading, and learning the Bible. Our lives become saturated with God’s word and our speech reveals those things. Jesus was a man of the book. It got him out of trouble with Satan, it answered questions he was asked, and it showed him what should be. Now, it’s not too hard to see the

opposite in those statements. Not being a person of the book will find us getting into trouble, not knowing the right answers, and not being able to recognize what is right and what is wrong. Error has a great advantage upon people who do not know the Bible and are content with a superficial and often artificial foundation of Biblical learning. Listen to people talking about the Bible, read a few blog pages and what you find is a repeating of shallow and false statements heard over and over again. Jesus said, "It is written."

We also notice here, that the Jews turned God's house, from a house of prayer to a robbers den. A robber's den was like a cave. It is where desperados would go after robbing a place. It was their hideout. In such a place you would find the worst. Tall tales of wickedness, bragging about theft and wrong doing and enjoyment of sinful activity. A robber's den is not a place for decent people. It was dangerous, dirty, and debased. This is the image that Jesus is drawing here. The Temple was God's. It was his idea. It was built according to his plans. It housed his spirit. It was a place of prayer. It was a place to connect to the Holy God of Israel. It was a place where God's holiness and man's sinfulness intersected. Spending a day in the Temple should have had a positive effect on a person. It should lift their spirits and move their hearts to walking in righteousness. It should have.....but for some locals, it became a place to make a profit. God had been replaced with greed. Instead of longing for Heaven, they were longing for wealth. They were using God to further their sinful ways. God was a commodity and they thought nothing of making money because of him. This was shameful, disgusting and wrong. Jesus would not have it. He drove them out. Notice, he didn't get in a fist fight. He didn't injure anyone. He didn't become violent. That's not Jesus. He was always under control.

But all of this makes a person think, doesn't it? Have our church services become so much about us that we simply use God as an opportunity to visit with friends, make business contacts, or find dates? Spending time with God ought to do something to us as well. Connecting, reminding, seeing, understanding God's holiness ought to make us walk in righteousness. Our sins and his righteous ways intersect. Asking for mercy and help in our walk with him ought to fill our hearts as we sing unto the Holy God.

I don't see folks in church services making profit, like in our passage today, but still, I wonder if Jesus would toss out a few of us for not paying attention, for being bored and for just not being thrilled to be in the presence of God. I'm glad he doesn't. I believe there would have been a few times that I would have been tossed out.

Getting serious about what we are doing is what we find in these verses.

Roger Shouse

