



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)

August 25, 2013

Jump Start # 467

Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”

The virgin birth of Jesus Christ introduces several powerful lessons. The gospels show the fulfillment of the powerful prophecy.

1. It shows the very unusual way that Christ would come into the world. The virgin that was chosen was Mary, a righteous woman. Mary was not very old, most say a young teenager. Her lineage as traced through the gospels connects Jesus to David, He was of royal blood, but you'd never know that in the life of His mother. She was common, she was plain. No wealth. No privileges. Nothing special that would have caught the world's attention, but her faith, caught God's eye.

I have thought about this young Mary and the baby Jesus. I wondered what experience she had with children, if any? How would she have the means to take care of this baby? Mary did marry Joseph and that would have provided some income to keep the family going, but they were still poor. Money opens doors to the schools and privileges. Jesus would not have those opportunities.

God put a lot of trust in Mary. He was counting on her to be a good mother. To care and love that child. She did. But it appears that she did this without much experience. It seems that is a pattern of God. Look at Moses. Yes, he was raised in a palace around Pharaoh, but what did he know about leading a nation, or standing before a world leader and making demands? Look at the apostles, they fit into this pattern as well. Matthew would preach and write his gospel to Jewish audiences, yet he was a tax collector, despised by Jews. None of the apostles seemed to have natural leadership abilities, none of them were public speakers and yet, all of them were called to preach.

I'm not writing these thoughts about Mary, or Moses, or the apostles, but us. God sees things in us that we may not. We can easily discredit ourselves from doing things in the kingdom because we have no experience. Others *may lead the charge in keeping others from trying because of a lack of experience. If it takes experience, Mary would not have been chosen to be Jesus' mother. Moses would not have led Israel, and the apostles would not have been the A team to spread the gospel.*

Inexperience when connected with a willing heart and the teachings of God can do great things. The apostles weren't sent to preach without first, watching the best preacher for three years. Moses had the mountain. Mary had Elizabeth. God has a way of putting the inexperienced in contact with those who will mold, guide and show them.

It is important for churches to allow young men to give their first lessons. Nerves, inexperience, and the fear of failure often make those first experiences hard for everyone. It is important for others to rally behind the guy who teaches his first adult class, leads his first hymn during services, or offers his first public prayer. Everyone starts at the same place, the beginning. Critics need to take a 'chill pill,' keep quiet and allow these people to try. If the critics had their way, Israel would still be in Egypt, because they wouldn't give Moses a chance. When someone makes a mistake, carefully and kindly help. Don't destroy.

Beyond church services, maybe you've thought about doing some things but the lack of experience and fear has kept your boat tied up to the shore. God uses those with a willing heart and those that trust Him to do great things. Do your homework. Talk to others who have done what you want to do. Pray for opportunity. Then untie that boat and see what happens.

Let me share a story with you. Recently, during a gospel meeting I was preaching in another state, a young couple had signed up to feed the preacher, me, for a meal before services. No big deal. It happens all the time for me. Not for this young couple. They lived in an apartment and had NEVER done anything like this before. They had no experience. They both were so nervous, wanting everything to be perfect. She was nervous about the meal. He was uptight about how the place looked. They wanted it to be a success, and it was. It was a wonderful experience for me. We laughed, we talked Bible, we looked at family photos and the time just flew. After services that night, they thanked and thanked me for coming, when it was myself who was trying to thank them. What this couple did, was untied their boat. They tried something they never done before. God used them to open their home for hospitality. The next time will be easier.

I've seen people do that with inviting friends to church services. I've seen it with someone teaching a friend. Those first times are nervous, they still are for me, but once you've untied that boat a time or two and experienced what God can do, you look forward to opportunities to do it again and again.

How about you? Is your boat still tied up to the dock? Afraid of trying something new? Are you willing to let others always do things? God may be waiting for you...He trusted a Mary...He trusted a Moses...He trusted those twelve apostles...He'll trust you.

Roger Shouse

