



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 # 455

Luke 15:17 *“But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!’”*

We return to the beloved story of the prodigal son. I've written several times about this, but keep finding new insights to this powerful story of forgiveness and second chance. You know the story, most of us have lived it ourselves and have our own personal version of it. The younger son, rebellious in heart, wanted away from his father's rule. He asked for his inheritance and took off. He wasted the money living recklessly. This is where the expression, "prodigal" comes from. Broke, friendless, and without help, he begins working for a gentile pig farmer. He is so low that he longs to eat what the pigs are eating. This is where our verse comes in.

He came to his senses. Sin is senseless. Sin doesn't make sense. He woke up from this spiritual fog and came to reality. What a mess he was in. He didn't blame dad, society or the pig farmer. He knew why he was there-it was his choices, dumb as they were.

Once the fog cleared, he started thinking about home. He took an honest look at his father. He realized the servants at home were living better than he was, a son, on the road. His thoughts were not about his brother, his things, but how his father treated the lowest of people-the hired men. The King James Version words this passage in a wonderful way. It says, *“how many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare...”* It's not that the hired servants have food, they have enough and even enough to share. His thoughts are, "make me like a hired servant." That is the speech he practices. If I was only a hired servant, I'd have food. The servants would share, they have plenty.

He saw his father as a generous, benevolent and kind man. A master didn't have to feed his servants that much. A master wasn't required to pay the servants so well that they would afford to eat so well. But his father did. His father was abundant in blessings.

Jesus uses this story to tell of a sinner coming back to God. The father in the story is a reflection of our true Father in Heaven. He is generous, benevolent and abundant in blessings. He treats us better than we deserve.

Consider the abundant blessings of God:

- Forgiveness-that's what this story is all about. God receives back. God blesses. The son wasn't made a servant, but restored as a son. God never runs out of forgiveness. It seems He never becomes weary of forgiving us. For that, I am thankful.
- Today-today is a gift from God. Each day is a gift. Some days are better than others, but there they are. How many days has God given you in your life? There are so many that we count them by YEARS. Each special. Each a blessing. Each a gift. Today is one of them. Did you think about that? My day is stuffed and packed, but I have been given this day. I am thankful.
- Heaven-we are one day closer today to Heaven. How beautiful Heaven must be. This is the end of the journey for us-Heaven. Not a visit, not a quick tour, but His home becomes our home. For this I am thankful.
- Jesus-God gave Him to us. He is our Savior, our Lord, and our friend. He cares, He loves and He illustrates what we ought to be doing.

Bread and enough to spare...that's amazing! That's God. Gloomy days, stressful times, and hardships can make us feel like all there is in life is pig food. So many settle for that. God has bread, and more than enough to spare. You'll remember in the story, there wasn't any bread where the pigs were. The prodigal had to get up and come home. That's where the bread is. Don't wait outside by the pig pen for bread, you'll never find it. You must come home to where God is. Sure it's hard coming home. Sure others, like older brothers, may whisper unkind things. But do you want to spend the rest of your life eating pig food when your Father has better for you?

No one cares as much as God does. No one comforts the way God can. No one will be there for you as much as God will. He's looking, even today for you to make up your mind, to come to your senses, to get with it and to get home.

Today, we are one day closer to Heaven.

(P.S. How about sharing this with someone who needs to come home).

Roger Shouse

