



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 # 372

Matthew 5:47 *“If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?”*

Jesus expected more from His disciples. They were to be citizens in the Kingdom of Heaven. Status quo was gone. They were walking with Jesus. They would do what no other Jews would do. They would pray for their enemies. With Jesus, they would travel to Samaria. They would seek to do good to all people. So radical was this, that the opponents started complaining. They accused Jesus of being a friend to the sinners. He was.

Several times in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus makes comparisons. He tells the disciples to do things differently than the hypocrites do. Another contrast Jesus makes, not just in the sermon, but throughout the gospels, is to the Gentiles. The Gentiles were considered the lowest of life in the eyes of Jewish people. Having the choice of rescuing a dog or a Gentile, most Jews would save the dog first. The Gentiles were pagans. They worshipped just about anything, including the sun, moon, rivers, mountains and birds. The Jews had the Law of God. The Gentiles didn't. The Jews thought the Gentiles were dumb, godless and faithless.

Notice how Jesus contrasts the disciples to the Gentiles:

- And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them...**(Mt 6:7,8a)**
- You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you...**(Mt 20:25, 26a)**
- If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector **(Mt 18:17)**

(OVER)

Included in this list would be our passage today. In the context, Jesus is discussing the treatment of others. He tells the disciples to love their enemies. Don't just love those who love you.

The tax collectors do that. Then comes our verse. Don't just greet those who greet you. The Gentiles do the same.

The Gentiles. Those who pray to a rock. Those who have no law. Those who were not included in Israel. That's what they do. You, who have God, the Law, the promises, do more. God expects more. Jesus adds this interesting expression, "what are you doing more than others?"

Those of us that have been saved by the grace of God, what are we doing more than others? The others are kind, decent people. The others are good citizens of the land. Jesus wants more. Jesus expects more.

The context would lead us to being kind, prayerful and helpful to others, not just our friends, our church family, our circle of relationships. The Gentiles do that. We do more. The context would lead us to being engaged and interacting with others outside our circle. This means doing what others won't do. This means extending my circle of love, help and availability.

This isn't natural nor easy for most of us. The Gentiles seem to have it right. Love those who love you. The rest, ignore and hate. God wants better from us. This is hard. But this is what walking with Jesus means.

It begins by remembering that God included you. We somehow think that we are so special. Not so. We think we are varsity material for God. Not so. God loved us when we were sinners. God forgave us based upon our faith in Jesus Christ. God included us. Now it's our turn to do the same toward others.

What do you do more than others? Great question. It compels us to look within and then get busy without. What are you doing...

Roger Shouse