



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 # 1885

Matthew 16:3 "And in the morning, 'There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?"

Our verse today is a portion of the response that Jesus offered to the Pharisees and the Sadducees who wanted to see a sign from Heaven. The very fact that the Pharisees and the Sadducees were together is remarkable. They were politically and spiritually poles apart from each other and most times avoided each other. But here, on this day, they have a common issue, Jesus. They wanted to see a sign from Heaven. They were wanting to see a miracle. They wanted a show. They were more interested in being amazed than who it was that could amaze them.

The Lord refused to give them a sign. A few sentences later He would say, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign." The only sign given would be a reference to Jonah. Instead of a miracle, Jesus gave them a verse.

The Lord's first reply to them was about discerning the weather. Red sky in the evening meant fair weather. Red sky in the morning meant a storm. A twist of this expression is: "Red sky in the night, sailor's delight. Red sky in the morning, sailor take warning." This passage is interesting because the common person was his own weatherman. They didn't have the tools nor the means to forecast the nightly weather. There were no apps to show the local radar. Tornado sirens and hurricane warnings and flash flood watches didn't exist back in those early days. The farmer, as well as the local merchant, would look to the skies to determine what the day would be like. He had no way of knowing what the weather would be in a few days. We plan our lives around the weather. We check the weather before we travel, go golfing, decide whether a wedding will be in doors or out doors. We even check the weather to decide what to wear for the day.

Jesus' point in referring to the weather was, 'you can tell what the day is going to be by the color of the sky, but you can't understand the times we are living in?' Why couldn't they discern that the Messiah was among them? Why could they not realize that it was time for them to get serious with the Lord? Why could they not put aside their prejudices and listen to what Jesus was saying? You can tell the weather, but you can't tell what is going on spiritually, even inside of their own hearts.

I wonder, with all of our modern ways of forecasting weather, if we have gotten any wiser when it comes to telling the times spiritually? Do we see what is going on around us? Do we know what is going on within us?

(OVER)

Here are some things to notice:

It's already July. The year is half over. Did you realize that? How are you doing with your plans for the year? Is anything different this year than last year, spiritually? Have you grown any so far this year? Have you been busy in the kingdom this year? We are getting older, but are we getting any better?

For many of us, our lives are half over. We are on the downside of life. There is not another fifty or sixty years left in us. Do we realize that? Are we doing anything about that? Are we preparing for our absence? Are we leaving our families in a good position financially, spiritually and morally? Are we leaving footprints for them to follow? Have we accomplished what we wanted to in our lives? Have we made a difference? Do we recognize the time?

The world is sliding downhill. Things are not picking up, they are falling apart. Do you see this? The moral issue is no longer homosexuality. Society has moved past that. Now it's gender. One mother, the news reported, refused to declare the gender of her newborn. She stated that it was up to the child to decide that not someone else. One state is thinking about issuing genderless driver's licenses. Mixed up and confused people without any foundation in their lives are running wild with these ideas and are changing the rules for society. Have you noticed?

The gospel of Happiness continues to be the most preached and embraced message of the modern church. Be happy. Do happy things. Follow your heart to the land of happy. Gone is holiness. Gone is godliness. Gone is doing what God says. Just dance through the flowers with a smile on your face. If rules do not bring happiness, then don't follow the rules. Be happy. That's the times we live in. Have you noticed?

Some congregations seem to be stuck and drifting. There is little movement. There is no visible direction. Communication is rare. Ideas are old. The songs, the preaching, and even the atmosphere seems stale. No one is willing to step up. No one is willing to bring life back into the place. Maintain seems to be the best hope the place has. Why? Have we discerned the times? Is this the best that we can give God? Can't things be improved? Clean up the church building. Paint the place. Toss the trash. Get into each other's homes. Put some life in the hearts of the people. Do we see what is going on?

How about our families? Are the kids connecting with the Lord or are they just going through the motions? Is there any discussion about the Lord outside the church building? Who do your kids call friends? Are you satisfied with that? How are your kids dealing with respect, authority and rules? Are they developing the heart of a servant? How is the condition of your flock, as asked in the O.T.? Do you know?

How is the marriage? You can tell the weather by the sky, can you tell the condition of your spouse? Is your mate growing closer to the Lord and you? Are you doing things together? What's racing through their minds at night? What's keeping them up at night? Do you know?

Red skies at night and red skies in the morning- different messages. Different "signs." Those long ago people understood what red at night meant and what red in the morning meant. They didn't get what Jesus was all about? Are we any different? Do we see what's going on? Do we see who Jesus is?

The Ephesians were told to make the most of their time because the days were evil.

How are we doing with these things?

Roger Shouse