



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 # 1962

Jeremiah 8:20 *"Harvest is past, summer is ended, and we are not saved."*

What an interesting expression we find here in Jeremiah, "Summer is ended, and we are not saved." It comes from a long and sad section in which the prophet tells the nation of coming doom. The idolatry and apostasy of the nation has led to this punishment from the Lord. Warning after warning has come and the people ignored it and did not see it. The stork in the sky knows the seasons, yet My people, the Lord declared, do not know the ordinance of the Lord. Our verse, 'harvest is past, summer is ended,' shows that the people have gone past God's patience. Time has run out. It's too late now.

The harvest and the summer, physically, were the times to gather and store crops for the coming winter. Missing the harvest, meant one was not prepared. No food was stored up. Some of us remember seeing our parents or grandparents, canning beans and putting up other produce during the harvest season. If one waited too late, the crops went bad and there was nothing to store up. Jesus used a similar thought in the Gospel of John. He told the disciples to lift up their eyes and look upon the fields. They were white unto harvest. Do not say there are yet four months until harvest. Now was the time.

This verse is fitting for my area. It's cool this morning. There is talk of frost. There are things that must be done before winter. The thought from Jeremiah and the thought from John are not preparing food, but preparing our souls and our hearts. Like the farmer who doesn't recognize what season he's in, we can do the same spiritually. We put things off. We wait for a better time. We look for that convenient season. And before we know it, summer is ended, and we are not saved.

Some thoughts for us:

First, the seasons come and go according to God's plan of nature, not our time table. We may want more summer to go out and play, but the rainy fall is upon us. These seasons move not by our schedule. The same is true with our health and our lives spiritually. We may be real busy right now in life. Demands at work, kids at home. Just no time. Pulled every direction. When things slow down, we say to ourselves, then we will get busy in God's kingdom. That may never happen. Things may never slow down. Work it in. Find a way. Seek first the kingdom. I can't wait until the fall, and then decide to harvest. It will be too late.

Second, the harvest passes by often times because we fiddled around too much and wasted time and didn't recognize the urgency of the day. When the Galatians were told "As you have opportunity, let us do good..." , those opportunities come and go whether we are ready or not. An opportunity to speak to someone about Jesus. They may even bring it up. But we're busy. We're juggling too many things. We'll get too it. Next thing we know, summer has ended. The person is no longer interested, or they are at least no longer interested in listening to you. An opportunity to encourage someone. They are going through a tough time. Maybe they have been in the hospital. You plan to stop by and lift their spirits. But this and that happens, and you put it off. Summer passes. They are not only home from the hospital, but they are back to services and you didn't do anything.

Third, harvest passes quickly in our families. Those little ones grow fast. Opportunities to show them how to be a servant, to let them see you teaching Bible classes, to have those important lessons around the dinner table, the season will pass very quickly. Next thing you know, they are dating. You haven't really talked to them yet about purity and how to be on dates. You turn around and there is talk about marriage. There is so much that they need to know. Have they been taught how to be responsible with money? Do they understand leadership in the home? Have they thought about how a marriage can help them or cripple them before the Lord? So much to talk about. But now, summer is ending. Where have you been?

Fourth, the harvest passes quickly in our lives. It seems when we are in school, the clock stops and the calendar turns so slowly. But once school is finished, life flies. You are thirty. Then forty-five. Then sixty. Retirement talk. Empty nesters. Down sizing. Now, there is no stopping that calendar. It turns so fast. We know there are fewer and fewer years ahead of us. What have we done? What have we accomplished? Not, houses. Not 401's. Not careers. But for the Lord. What have we done for the congregation we have worshipped with. We may have been with a church for decades. Have we done anything? Sure we have picked up things that the church offered. We've grown spiritually. But what have we added? What good has our presence done? There was talk once about serving as a deacon and later an elder, but we turned it down quickly. Not the right time we said. Too busy we said. And now, summer is ending on our lives here. What footprints have we left for the next generation to follow? What example of service have we provided? Other than showing up, have we added any value to the kingdom? The harvest is past. Summer has ended. What have we done?

Fifth, unlike Jeremiah's sad lament for the nation, we still have opportunity. Our harvest is only past when we are no longer here. There is still that opportunity to step up things spiritually. Find that young preacher out there, and encourage him. Find that young family, and shock them by all the good that you can do for them. Find that young heart and mentor them. Blow the dust off your books and get studying and teach some classes. Get out some nice dishes and invite some families into your home. It's time to stop thinking about stuff and start doing. The air is cool. Summer is passing. There is no going back, not for this year. You may have wasted years, and not been as you should. There is no going back. But you can do what you should with what remains. Make a difference. Pour your heart, time and even money into the kingdom. Someday, we will be finished here. What will be said about your time here? How will brethren remember you? Have you helped any?

The harvest is past. Summer is over. We are lost. Sad, sad words. But reminders to each of us. Those same sad words do not have to be our story. Let's get busy. We know what to do.

Roger Shouse