



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)

November 12, 2017

Jump Start # 1961

1 John 4:19 "We love because He first loved us."

So, there has been this stray cat hanging around our house. He looks pitiful and rough. He's not eaten in awhile, is scared and jittery. My sweet wife felt sorry for this cat. She has been feeding him every morning. He now hangs around looking for the free food. The cat still won't let us get too close to him. He is putting on some weight and his eyes are looking better. His life has gotten better because of the care my wife has given him. Now, the weather is turning. It's supposed to get cold. She's worried about the cat. My thoughts are it's an outside cat, he'll figure things out. That wasn't the right answer. So, off to the store we went. We got a Styrofoam cooler, straw and a tub to put the cooler in. Last night she was shaving the outside of the cooler so it would fit into the tub. Then she cut holes in the tub and cooler so the cat could crawl in. The straw will be the bedding and the lids will be duck taped and sealed tightly. All of this, with the hope that Mr. Cat will go in when it turns cold. After my wife was done, there was a real mess to clean up. Styrofoam doesn't sweep up very well. There was a lot of time put into this kitty hotel. This cat has no idea of all the work that my wife put into this project. He doesn't realize what cat food costs nor how much my wife is trying to not only save his life, but make it better. This cat doesn't come up and rub our legs. It does let us pet it. Get too close and it turns and runs. There's no "thank you," out of that cat. My wife is doing this simple because she cares for this critter. She has even named this cat.

All of this took me to our verse today. God loves us. He loved us first. He loved us when we weren't very loveable. He loved us when we went thinking about Him. He loved us while we were still sinning. That's God. And, in many ways, we are like that outside cat that hangs around our house. We show up for the blessings and get to the point in our lives where we expect them. God has gone through a lot of trouble to not just keep us alive, but to make our lives better. More than Styrofoam that is hard to sweep up, God had a cross. He sent Jesus to a world that mocked Him, laughed at Him, challenged Him, denied Him and wouldn't even say, "thank you," for all the trouble that He went through. There are times in our lives when we are called upon to do something that we really do not want to do. I was asked on stage once at a show in Branson. I really did not want to do that. I can only imagine what Jesus felt coming to this earth. He did it. He did it willingly. He did it even though He may not have wanted to. He did it to make our lives better.

God sees us not as cute and adorable puppies in the pet shop window. We were like that stay cat at my house, not much to look at. We were rebellious and selfish. We ran from God when He tried to reach out for us. We like the blessings of God, but we didn't want to be around God. Yet, God didn't give up. He knew what was coming. He knew just what we needed. Instead of a kitty house, God prepared a cross.

(OVER)

There was a sacrifice. God didn't give up junk. He sent the best, Jesus. Pure. Obedient. Sinless. Perfect. That was the sacrifice for us. We have no idea of what all God went through. He did it not for His sake, but for us. Without His help, we were lost. We'd die eternally, if God hadn't done something.

Now, I don't expect much from that outside cat. A purr once in a while would be nice, but it's a cat. It doesn't understand, nor really care what we went through. I've wondered if that cat would even be alive today, had my wife not started feeding it. But we're not cats. We can do more than that cat does. We are capable of understanding, and that's why God has explained what He did in the Scriptures. More than that, we are capable of thanking God, trusting God and following God. We can worship God. We can obey God. He has saved us and we can show our thanks by loving Him and being like Him.

Some animals do well on their own. I don't think this outside cat was one of them. He looked like he was on the fast track to a quick death. We don't do well on our own either. Oh, so many think that they do. They look at the square footage in their house, their fat 401's, the degrees on the wall, the season tickets to the ballgames, the scrapbooks filled with vacation pictures and declare that life has been pretty good for them. It has. They have been blessed. But they don't see what's coming. All of those things do little when we are standing before the throne of God in judgment. What profit is there, Jesus asked, if one gains the whole world and loses his soul? Only God can save our souls. Only God knows what it takes.

It will be interesting to see if the outside cat will even go into the shelter my wife constructed. He may avoid it. We may get some other animals in there. All this work may be wasted. It may be something that the cat needs but never uses. He may end up freezing, while a shelter is right there for him. And, like that silly cat, some of us may not freeze, but die spiritually, while our salvation is right there in Jesus Christ. All the work that God has done may be wasted on us, because we refuse to turn to the cross and obey the Lord. Our stubbornness will keep us away from God and it will be our own death.

It is amazing to see spiritual lessons all around us. Open your eyes, is what the Lord told the disciples. A stray cat that's hungry and a mess. A lot like us. Hope is found in someone greater helping out. It's the same for us.

Do we get what God has done for us?

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)