



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 # 2023

Matthew 11:28 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Our verse today begins what is commonly called the great invitation of Jesus Christ. There are several remarkable thoughts that we do well to just look at carefully and thoughtfully.

First, it is remarkable that Jesus wants us. His call is for us to come to Him. He, alone, is the answer that the world needs. He, alone, is the answer that you and I need. This invitation of Jesus, is found illustrated in the manner Christ walked upon this earth. He wasn't secluded. He wasn't unapproachable, hard to find, or kept away from the crowds. It was just the opposite. Friend and foe found easy access to Jesus. They begged Christ to come to their home to heal family members. They interrupted Him while He was teaching. Martha did that. The man who wanted Jesus to settle a family inheritance did that. Come to Me, is the call of Jesus. He didn't have body guards. He didn't have front men screening people.

Second, this invitation, or call, goes to those who are weary and heavy laden. Jesus is inviting people who are tired. Not tired because they have been up all night. Not tired because they have been on a long journey. But those who are tired of life. They are tired of being beat up by life. They are tired of failing. They are tired of guilt. They are tired of sin. The "heavy laden," is what life does to it. The demands. The guilt. The burdens. The failures we make because we haven't followed Christ. We are worn out, beat up, and defeated.

This is who Jesus is calling. It's not the best. It's not those who have their act all together. It's not those who are spotless and near perfect. No, it's the other end of the line. It's those who are tired, dirty, dragging their feet. They have chased the dollar and didn't find anything worthwhile. They have lived without God and that got them no where. They have bowed to idols and those idols provided no help. They are tired of being alone. They are tired of being scared. What a group of people. The spiritual homeless. The spiritual lost. The spiritual failures. Our names would be right among them. Many do not recognize that they are weary and heavy laden. They are sinking lower and lower in sin and doing more and more wrong things, but that's all they know. Another day is but another day without God. For so many that will be today. No prayers to start the day. No Scriptures to help mold their thoughts and character today. No desire to be a servant to others. No shame in having a foul and offensive mouth. But for some, this is getting old, very old. They are miserable, tired a wondering what happens at the end.

(OVER)

Third, Jesus calls them to Him to find rest. Come to Me, is the invitation. Many have misread this. They say, "Come to Me," but what they mean is "Go to church." We need to gather with the church family to worship. That is Biblical, expected and helpful. But the rest doesn't come from the church. We are the church. Just as "the people" are the government, the "saved" are the church. We are former weary and heavy laden people. We are people who have found rest. The help didn't come from within us. It's not us who can help others. It's Jesus. Come to Me, is what Jesus says. Thousands flock to church buildings every week. They love the singing, the feeling and the atmosphere, but deep down, that weariness lingers. The church doesn't solve the problems. The church can't. It's Jesus. We can preach the church so much that a person might get the impression that we do not need Jesus. How mistaken that is.

Fourth, Jesus tells the weary to come to Him. "Come to Me," are the words. That takes some action on our part. That involves getting up and getting out of that chair. We want God to come to us. We want to sit in our chair, watching TV and then God comes and fixes our problems. We say a simple prayer and we want all things to be made right, hopefully by the morning. God fix my finances. God fix my mate. God fix my kids. God fix my boss. We want to sit back and have God do all the work. The call here is for us to come to Him. Jesus didn't say, "I'm coming to you," but rather, you come to Me. That takes some doing on our part. That means we must have some drive about us. The guy with the lazy bones, won't come. He'll wait and wait for God to come to him, but that's not the reading of this passage.

Fifth, what follows is what we do when we come to Jesus. Two action words, Take and Learn. Take my yoke-that means direction. Yokes were put around oxen to pull carts. We can carry these burdens because we now have a yoke that allows us to do that. Then, Learn from Me. Learn. What do we see in Jesus? We see righteousness. We see obedience. We see faithfulness to the word. We see compassion. We see a servant. We see someone busy spiritually. We see goodness. We see that. Do we learn that?

Now, where is it that you and I will see these things and learn these things? Obviously, in the Scriptures. We open the N.T. and we see, learn, believe and become. It doesn't take too many pages in the N.T. to get the idea that we often have too much of us in us. Selfishness blinds us. Selfishness feeds greed and jealousy. Selfishness resists changing and admitting wrong. Come take. Come learn. This is where you'll find rest. The rest offered by Jesus doesn't fall from Heaven like manna. There are actions on our part. Could it be that I've never taken the yoke of Christ? Could it be that I've never learned from Christ? "Well, I go to church," someone says. Great. But are you putting on the yoke of Jesus and learning from Jesus?

I often fear two things come out of that learning part.

First, some never learn. They come and sit. They come and stare. They never build a bridge from the preached word of God to their own lives. They come year after year, but they remain the same. They have never learned.

Second, some have learned facts, but they never learned to become. They could name the rivers, find the cities on a Bible map. They could tell you the names of the judges, the apostles and the books of the Bible in order. They know a bunch of stuff about the Bible but they have not learned to become like Jesus. They are not changed. And in all of this, they still lack that rest that Jesus offers.

The rest is forgiveness from sins. The rest is hope in a world that is lost. The rest is peace of mind. The rest is pleasing your God. The rest is confidence and assurance that is wrapped in the grace of God. Death is no longer a fear, not when one is in Christ. The thoughts of the day are about glorying God. Opportunities to serve are sought out every day. You find that you have changed. You are more interested in Him than you are yourself.

Come to Me and Find rest for your souls. It's there. Do you have it today?

Roger Shouse (used by permission)