



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 #2014

Psalms 27:3 "Though a host encamp against me, my heart will not fear. Though war arise against me, in spite of this I shall be confident."

It's a terrible thing to be afraid. I'm not one that likes horror movies, haunted houses and things that scare me. I don't like being scared. I really don't like paying money to be scared. It's one thing for someone to jump out and frighten you, but there is another fear that is much worse. It's an internal fear. It's a fear of the unknown...the fear of death...the fear of the worst happening. Those are the things that keep us awake at night. Those are the things that do not seem to leave us.

A couple of days ago, I wrote about something I read from my grandma's diary in 1931. Her entry, after stating that all the banks in the state had closed, was "I don't know what will happen next." That statement prompted some to ask if I would write more on that. Just what will happen next?

It is easy to say, "I don't know." No one knows what will happen next. But that's not exactly right. There are some things that we do know. We can be sure of some things that are coming down the pike.

1. We know, if we continue to live long enough, the outer man falls apart. Ecclesiastes says this. Corinthians says this. And all we have to do is look around to see this. There are not very many twenty-year-olds, that are using walkers, wearing hearing aids, and take mountains of medicine every day. But given enough time and that used to be twenty-year-old will age and those will become part of his life. "It's not fun, getting old," is something I'm told often by the senior citizen crowd. Too many miles on the body and things just wear out. We're not living forever here in this body, nor in this place. There is a divine appointment coming with death. For the disciple, Christ has taken away the fear of death. Death is merely going through a doorway to get into the room where we want to be.

2. We know, Jesus is coming. That's a promise that is found throughout the N.T. Jesus is coming! In the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, the groom returned. In the parable of the talents, the master returned. Jesus is returning. When Jesus returns, everything will change. The dead will be resurrected. This earth will cease to be.

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3. We know that we will be judged someday. That's another promise that is found in the N.T. We will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. It is God's grace and our faith that will make all the difference. Mercy meets justice and God will determine the eternal destiny of each person. That's coming. That's a promise.

But there are other things that we do not know. Maybe we wished we did, but I tend to think that for most of us, we are glad we don't know.

- We do not know what our life will be like tomorrow, so says the book of James. We make plans for tomorrow. Our schedules are full. We have a lot to do and a lot of places to go. But we do not know what will happen tomorrow. A child gets sick, and needs to go to the doctor, and suddenly that changes the plans. Had we known that, we would have not made the plans. We did not know what would happen tomorrow. There are days the car may not start. That changes things. There are days that other people don't keep their schedules and that intersects and disrupts your schedule. We don't plan to have car accidents. We don't plan to have emergency runs to the hospital. We don't plan to get the flu. There are days computers don't work. There are days the internet isn't running smoothly. Life has a way of messing up your life. We plan. We hope. We pray. But we don't know what will happen tomorrow.
- We don't know when our time here is up. That's a good thing. If we were told the actual date of our death, most of us would be upset, obsessed, and not able to do much good. We'd think about that date all the time. There would be a app counting down the minutes you have left. We would become a worried mess. As it is, we live as if each day is our last. We live with one foot already in Heaven. We make plans if we are here, and we make it our ambition to please the Lord, so that if we are not here, we are with Him. We can look at stats, read about the best places to live, eat well, exercise often, but in the end, no one knows when their last day is here.
- Along with this last thought, we don't know when Jesus is coming. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins ends with, "you do not know the day nor the hour." They were to be alert. Multiple times the coming of Jesus is likened to a thief in the night. No one knows when the thief comes. Some like to predict dates. Some watch the news and think what happens with foreign governments is a tell-tell sign. Jesus is coming, we just don't know when.

Our verse, one of many from Psalms that reminds us to not fear. The Psalmist was confident. The enemy encamped around him. There were wars. Yet, he did not fear. We remember the famous, Psalms 23 that declares, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and They staff; they comfort me" (v. 4). I will not fear.

I believe one of the best expressions comes from the passage about the virtuous woman. There among those magnificent qualities, we find, "she smiles at the future" (Prov 31:25). How could she do that? She didn't know what the future holds. In the words of my grandma, "she didn't know what was going to happen next." It's easy to smile at the past. Get out some old photo albums. That's all you need. It's easy to smile at the present. Get some people together and the smiles, laughter and happy times flow. That's easy. But to smile at the future? How can one do that when we don't know about wars, economies, storms, trials and hardships?

How can we not fear? How can we be confident? The answer is simple. It lies in a deep faith that trusts in the Lord. Do you remember the things that you worried about and kept you tossing and