



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)

September 23, 2018

Jump Start # 2162

Psalms 122:1 "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'"

Gathering to worship is as old as mankind on earth. Abel worshipped. Noah worshipped. Abraham worshipped. David worshipped. The disciples, the apostles, the early church came together to worship. We sometimes use the expression, "going to church," to really mean gathering to worship. The church is the people, saved people. They gather, we go to them, in a sense, for the purpose of worshipping God.

A Pew Survey listed the top reasons why people do not regularly attend worship services. God wants us to worship. We need to want to as well. It's not a duty one has to do such as getting your annual physical, but it's a privilege, an honor and a joy. Surrounded by some of the best faces on the planet, God's people, you get to sing praises, thank the Lord and hear His word read. Good things happen when we worship with others.

Worship reminds us that we are not alone on this journey. There are others, all kinds of others. Folks who have gone through tough times, and there they are worshipping God. It's rather like the ole' Armour hot dog song. Fat kids, skinny kids, kids who climb on rocks, tough kids, sissy kids, even kids with chicken pox. We are all in this together. Gathering to worship illustrates this.

Worship has a way of putting God before our eyes. Our schedules and our busyness can put God lower on our list of important things. Prayer gets sidelined. No time for the Bible. Too much to do and too many places to go today. When we come to worship, it's like life taps the brakes. We slow down a moment. We catch our breath. We realize much of his haste and hurry doesn't matter. We remember God. We remember what's really important. Worship does that to us. It has a way of getting our order back into order. The songs are about God. We pray to God. It is God's word that we read. Worship is about God.

Worship has a way of chasing fears, doubts and worries out of our minds and out of our hearts. Things tend to bother us. They tend to stick around and pester us. The more we worry, the less we pray. But in worship, we remember ancient Israel. We remember Jesus. We remember storms on the sea. We remember oppression of Egyptians. We remember fearful moments with demons and dying children. These are not just stories, they are events that happened. These are God's footnotes. This is the proof that He is. This is where our hope forms and our faith is fortified. Worship will do that to us.

Yet, large numbers do not take advantage of worship. Every week some are missing. Why? Here's what the Pew Survey found. Top reasons why people do not regularly go to worship:

(OVER)

- They practice their faith in "other ways" (37%)
- They are not believers (28%)
- No reason is "very important" (26%)
- They haven't found a place to worship that they like (23%)
- They don't like sermons (18%)
- They don't feel welcome (14%)
- They don't have time (12%)
- Poor health or mobility (9%)
- No place to worship in their area (7%)

That's the findings. The first thing that stands out is the math. Adding up all these percentages comes to 174%. Some must have had more than one reason. Other than poor health, most of this sounds like excuses, and, excuses that could be fixed if a person really had the mind to. And, that's exactly what most of this comes down to, having the "want to." Unless a person "wants to," they won't. Some seem to misunderstand what the purpose of worship is about. It's not like going to a movie theatre to be entertained. It's about you giving something worthwhile to God. So, a person doesn't like sermons. God does. And, if the sermon is Biblically true, it just might be the thing one needs to change their life for the better. Some claimed they didn't have the time. They have the same amount of time as those who did go to worship. God doesn't bless worshippers with an extra four hours in a day because they went to church. We all have the same amount. The amount of time has never changed. It was the same for Noah, as it was for Paul, as it was for your great-grandfather, as it is for me today. It's not finding more time, because you won't. There's no more time to be found. It's using your time wisely. It's being efficient, organized, and, productive. It's not wasting time. It's not being idle or lazy.

It would make an interesting class or series of classes to go through these nine survey results and reply to each one of them. What do you say when someone tells you, "I just don't have time," to go to worship? What do you say?

It also seems that these nine responses appear as approved reasons for not going to worship. I don't see much guilt, shame or feeling bad about missing worship in these responses. It's like a note from home for missing school. It's ok, I have a reason. But is it ok? Is it ok with God? Is it ok that I don't think any more of God or God's people to adjust my life and my schedule to get down to the church house to worship? Do these nine replies get people off the hook? I worship in "other ways." Whose ways? Talk to Cain about that. He tried that. Talk to Nadab and Abihu about that. They tried it as well. Instead of getting up on Sunday morning, getting dressed and driving down to the church house, I roll over in bed, turn on the TV and watch ESPN. I just worship in a "different way." Really?

Maybe it's time we started impressing upon people that God really wants you to worship Him. He wants you to worship Him the way He has patterned it in the Bible. He wants you thinking about Him. He wants you praising Him. He wants you to follow Him. He wants you to obey Him. He wants you to include Him in all that you do. Maybe we've given a green light too often for not coming. Kids playing in a ball game. Can't make it. We say, "I understand." Company came last night. Can't be there. "Understand," we say. Last weekend to take the family to the lake. That's important. "Got it," we say. And, with all of those, we have just moved worship to a secondary status. Come worship, unless you can find something more interesting to do. For some, just staying in bed is more interesting. That's all it takes.

Our verse today, a great one to tell others. "Let us go to the house of the Lord together." Come with us. We'd love to have you. "Kids got a ballgame. You understand." No, I really don't. God's looking for you. He wants you to be around his people, not ball players. "Well, company came." Great. Bring them with you. Maybe they'll learn a thing or two about God. "Last weekend for the lake. You know." No, I really don't. God makes all things and wants you to be where He is, and that's at worship. Come, let us go to the house of the Lord together. Come, sit with us. Come, let me show you some great people. Come.

Why worship? God wants you to. It's good for you. If you put your all into it, it can even make a better you.

I was glad when they said, "Let us go to the house of the Lord." Sunday is the best day of the week!

So, why do I go to worship? Because God's going to be there and I just want to be where He is. I need to tell Him "Thank You."

