



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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Matthew 10:42 "And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

The other day my wife was going through some tubs of papers that had many of our kids high school stuff, papers, pictures, news clippings and things like that. The kids are all married now and it's time to pass some of these things on to them and it's time to pitch some things. She's better at pitching than I am. When you save and save things stack up and there comes a time when someone has to go through it all. In this process, she ran across a letter from a preacher. He has now passed on. I had preached the funeral of his daughter. When I stop and think about it I remember it, but it's been some time ago. I had forgotten the letter. He was thanking me for my words and thanking the church for the support through that trying time. His letter was a cup of cold water to me. My wife put the letter on my desk. Keep it or pitch it? I chose to keep it. I have an old book with several famous preacher's names in it and I think I will stick that letter there.

Our passage is just that. Someone needed a drink and someone gave a cup of cold water. He didn't dig a well for the person. He didn't purchase a pond for the person. He didn't even give him a case of bottled water. One cup. It was what the Lord asked the Samaritan woman for. It doesn't cost much. It doesn't take much time to provide. But the benefit for the moment is the good that it accomplished. Later in the day, the thirsty person would need another drink of water. The next day, he need yet another drink of water. The one who provided the cup of water was not to take care of the thirst for the rest of his life. It was just that moment. It was just now.

So often we are looking for the big, life changing event that will make the trumpets of Heaven blow and will be long remembered. And, in so doing, we miss simple opportunities such as giving a drink of cold water to a thirsty person. A year later, even less than that, the thirsty person, as well as the one who gave the drink, may have forgotten the simple event. It wasn't anything big, however it was the right thing to do. With the cold water, there wasn't a lecture about why he didn't have any water. There wasn't a sermon about being better prepared. There wasn't admonishing about carrying a water jug with you. No warnings were given about where are you going to get you next drink from. No threats came with the cup explaining that you only get one cup. None of that. A person simply gave a cup of cold water. No big deal, but it was enough that Heaven noticed. More than that, Heaven recognized that a reward comes with that.

In many ways, this passage is just like the old letter from the preacher to me. I'd forgotten about it. It touched my heart then and it did again the other day when I read it. That old preacher is on the other side. I expect he's written dozens of letters throughout his life. Droplets of blessings that encouraged others. He may not have even remembered all the letters he wrote, but Heaven does.

Here's some examples of cups of cold water that we don't think much about:

- A Bible class teacher is missing her helper one day. There's lots of kids in the class. You can tell by the look on her face that she's not sure she can do this alone. You ask if you can sit in and help. What a wonderful cup of cold water.
- A man shows up for worship services. He pauses and looks and looks. Someone can tell that it's his first time to be there. He walks up with a smile and a handshake and not only helps him find a seat, but asks if he can sit with him. A cup of cold water.
- An elderly Christian comes to the church building pushing a walker. Immediately several men run to the doors and they swing open widely for her. With smiles and words of joy she enters without any struggle. Simply a cup of cold water.
- A young man gives an invitation on Wednesday evening. It was really well thought out and he did a great job delivering it. You drop him a note letting him know how great it was seeing him doing that. A cup of cold water has been given.
- A man thanks the congregation for helping him during a trying time in his life. There has been calls, cards and food given to the man and his family. He has received multiple cups of water. But in his public thank you, he returns water by recognizing the love that abounds among each other.
- A person sits with a loved one in the hospital. It's going to be a long day. Someone drops in over their lunch break and spends a few minutes with the family. Cold water has been given.
- There is a funeral that takes place during the week. There in the audience sits several of the shepherds. Many have taken off of work so they could be there. Their faces, their presence, more cold water.

What I want you to realize is that so many of us have been in this cold water business that we do not even realize it. We'd think, opening a door for someone is nothing. Neither is cold water. Sitting with someone in the hospital is no big deal. Neither is cold water. That's simply the point.

The person with water thought enough of the thirsty person that he shared. You share your time, your words, your heart, your prayers with others. You think enough of others that nothing would stop you from doing this. While we may dismiss all of this as nothing, it is something to the thirsty person. It may not change his life, but it certainly helped him for the moment.

We cannot make the water, God does that. But we can share God's blessings. Maybe you cannot preach the sermon, but you can share it with someone that needs to hear that message. Maybe you cannot write the article, but you can share it with someone who could be helped by it. Cups of cold water.

A grieving father, a fellow preacher, wrote me a letter a long time ago. Something I said helped him. His letter to me became a cup of cold water that encourage my heart. So often that's truly what happens. That cup of cold water gets passed back and forth. Someone encourage us and in return we encourage them back and on and on it goes. It's a wonderful blessing.

And to think, Heaven noticed. Heaven sees. I suppose Heaven would also see when we refuse to give water. Or, when we ignore someone who needs water. But here, in this passage, Jesus is reminding the disciples of the simple things that matter. They will be given water and they will give water. And, we do the same.

Get you cup ready. You just may need to help someone today.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)
