



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 # 3052

Acts 3:6 "But Peter said, 'I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!'"

Our verse takes place on the temple steps near what is called the 'Beautiful Gate.' A crippled had been left there. He was spending this day, as every day, begging. People would pass by and he'd likely hold out a cup and beg for mercy. At the end of the day, those who left him there would pick him up and take him home. What he had collected in his cup would be what he had to live on. The next day, it was the same thing. His pitiful life didn't have much of a future. This wasn't a temporary set back and he'd soon be able to get back to work again. No, not this man. He was born a crippled. All his life he has depended upon others.

But on one particular day, two apostles, Peter and John pass by this crippled beggar. Instead of putting some coins in his cup, and rather than looking away, as most would likely do, they told the crippled to "Look at us." And, taking his hand they pulled him up and immediately he could walk and even leap. He entered the temple with those chosen two and Peter used the occasion to preach Jesus.

Within our verse, Peter makes a profound statement that we need to consider. He said, "...what I do have I give to you." The beggar was hoping for a few coins. He got something far better. He got what no one else could give him. He now was cured. He walked for the first time in his life. Now, he could get a job. Now, he could move on with his life. Now, he no longer needed someone to carry him each day to the temple steps. Healed. Whole. What a blessing from Heaven.

And, with that simple statement, "...what I do have I give to you," let us consider what we have.

First, what we have is worth sharing. Some things we do not want to give to others. No one wanted to get the Covid from others. No one who had it wanted to give it to their families. There are some sentimental things we possess that we really do not want to part with. But the most valuable possession is eternal life. It's worth more than your home. It's worth more than your net worth. Peter understood that what he had was worth giving to this beggar. Peter could have given this crippled a shovel, but what would he do with that? He gave something that the crippled never

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expected to receive. He gave him something that would make his life better. A few coins would have been nice, but the crippled would have to be brought back to that spot again the next day. What Peter gave him, was freedom from begging. Peter gave him life.

And, what is it that we have? We have the good news of Jesus Christ. We have the message of salvation and redemption. Freedom from sin is found in Christ. A second chance is offered by the Lord. This is more than "do you wanna come to church with me?" This is the message of God throughout the Bible. This is hope, life and eternity. It doesn't matter the size of our congregations, the look of our church buildings. Those things do not matter. What matters is that there is a message that can change lives and we must share it. Don't keep that message locked up in the church house. Don't keep it to yourselves. Share and share it freely.

Second, Peter recognized the great treasure he was giving this man. Peter could have made the man's toes wiggle. He could have restored one leg. But he brought life to what was dead. As the man was leaping and praising God in the temple, I can just see Peter and John looking at one another and smiling. It wasn't them, it was the power of God. They were simply instruments of God. They were doing what God wanted. And, that's our cue. That's our call. We simply do what God wants us to do. We are instruments of the Lord.

Third, Peter cared enough about this man to stop and talk with him. How easily it would have been to ignore him. Peter could have looked the other way. Peter could act like most do around those who beg. But he didn't. He could have done what the Levite and priest did to the injured man in the story of the Good Samaritan. They walked on the other side. He not only looked at the man, he had the man look at him. He talked. He extended mercy. Peter didn't ask him about his injury. Peter didn't ask how long he had been this way. Peter didn't ask what all the man had done to try to get better. Those things didn't matter. What mattered was that Peter cared. Peter loved. And, love will drive you to try to make a life better.

Fourth, Peter gave without any expectations or promises. Peter didn't say, 'I'll make you better, but you have to promise me that you'll go to church on Sunday.' Nope, he didn't say that. He didn't say, 'I'll make you better, but I want you to give us all the money you got today begging.' Nope, no of that. The man might have jumped up and ran home. But he didn't. He followed Peter and John into the temple. He was so happy, excited, praising and leaping that others came running to see. A crowd gathered. Peter used that moment to preach Jesus. When we attach strings to the things that we do, it cheapens the gift. It appears that we are buying someone's dedication. It makes the person feel obligated to us and they may not want to be. That's not the way to do things. Do good. Help others. Shine your light. But don't use those things to strong arm someone into obeying the Lord. If they do, it most times will not last. Let them see love. Let them taste the goodness of the Lord. Let them experience grace.

What do we have? We have the truth in Jesus Christ. We have a Father who is in Heaven. We have hope. We have confidence. We have knowledge. We have a fellowship. We have forgiveness. What I have, I give to you.

There is an expression preachers long ago used to use: Are we fishers of men or keepers of the aquarium?

Sure is something to think about...

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

