



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 # 2829

Matthew 27:39 *“And those who were passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads”.*

Our verse today is a scene from Calvary. The Lord is dying for sins, as the crowd below are adding more and more sins to their souls. Jesus is dying and the crowd is verbally assaulting Him. Two expressive words are used to describe the atmosphere: “hurling” and “wagging.”

KJV: reviled and wagging their heads
ESV: derided and wagging heads
NIV: hurled and shaking heads
CEB: insulted and shaking heads

We don't use the word “wagging” very much in reference to ourselves. We talk about a dog wagging his tail. I doubt your doctor has ever asked you, “Have you been wagging your head lately?” In our verse it was a sign of disapproval. The crowds were shaking their heads “No.” They disagreed with Jesus. They did not approve of Jesus. Their heads illustrated what was in their hearts.

Now, some lessons from wagging heads:

First, these Jews gave both verbal and visible signs of where they stood with Jesus. They didn't like Him. They wanted nothing to do with Him. If we were there, we could hear what they said and we could see by their shaking heads, that they were not fans of Jesus. I shake my head often during the sermon. It's not shaking no, but rather, it's the up and down “yes,” that I do. Preachers like to see such things. It shows that you are not only listening, but you agree and they are connecting with you. Now, I don't do this head shake while I'm preaching, but while our other preacher, Jason, is. I think that is important to do. The preacher wonders sometimes if the audience is with him or not. The Jews verbalized it and they showed it by the shaking of their heads that they were not with Jesus.

(OVER)

Second, just because someone shakes their head back and forth does not mean that you are wrong. These head shaking Jews were wrong, not Jesus. Just because someone disagrees does not mean that they are right and you are wrong. Look into things. Listen. Investigate. It may be that you are both on the same page, but using different words. It may be that they were mistaken and a careful study will show that. And, it may mean that you are in the wrong and you can make some changes. Wagging a head is one person's perspective and it might not always be correct.

Third, sometimes keeping our head still is silently being a coward. Bow your head when you pray. Not just in the church building but other places. People will notice. A woman spoke out to me the other day because I bowed and prayed before I ate. She noticed. She said that was nice to see. We had a short conversation about God and prayer. It all began because a head was bowed. These days of wearing masks, it's hard to see facial expressions. Shaking our heads let's people know. When I was in India, the people there in everyday conversation, shake their heads back and forth. I tried to follow but got dizzy.

Fourth, hurling abuse and shaking heads is what the Lord received in his dying moments. There was no one to hold His hand. There was no one wiping his brow with a soft cloth. There was no one talking kindly to Him. There was no one reminding Him of Heaven. No hymns were being played. The text doesn't reveal that anyone was praying. Those are the things we do when a loved one passes. But for the Lord, it was abuse, insults and wagging heads. There was no comfort in His final moments. No one to tell Him "thank you." No one to say, "We love you." Abuse and wagging heads. It would have been better had Jesus just died all alone. Instead, as He was offering Himself, the people who needed Him, were turning their backs on Him.

Jesus did not hurl abuse back. He didn't shout ugly things in His final breaths. His focus was upon His Father. There are seven statements Jesus makes while on the cross. Most of them were prayers. Sometimes that's a good lesson for us. When others are hurling insults, abuse and criticism our way and wagging their heads in disrespect, say nothing, only pray. Things can get tense and even ugly when one tries to engage someone in conversation who has the mindset to hurl abuse and insults. That is the time to be silent and pray.

Wagging heads—sounds like it could have been a rock group from the '60s but it was the way some treated Jesus. Disciples are more like bobble heads, our heads affirm the truthfulness and goodness of our Lord. The crowd expressed their thoughts about Jesus— both verbally and visually.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)
