



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 # 3179

John 6:18 "And the sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing."

Our verse today sets the stage for Jesus walking on the water. The Lord had sent the disciples ahead in a boat. Mark's Gospel tells us that Jesus went up to pray while the disciples were crossing the sea. It was dark. The wind was against them. They had already experienced a storm earlier. It was so intense that they thought they were going to die. Now, here they are, on the same body of water, and yet another storm is brewing.

What is interesting about this one, is that the disciples did just what Jesus told them to do. Get in the boat and go to the other side. They were trying to do that. Sometimes we encounter storms because we did not obey God. Our choices were not the right choices and as a result our lives become messy and tangled up. Not here. They did what they were supposed to and yet, they are still in a storm. That point alone bothers many. Some have it in their mind and in their own made up theology, that if they do what is right, troubles will go away. Not so. John the baptist was doing right, yet he was put in prison and his life was taken from him. Paul would do what was right, yet he was beaten multiple times. Doing what God wants you to do can put you right in the middle of a storm.

There are some lessons to be learned about days that are bad.

First, not every day turns out like we have planned. We go to bed at night with a schedule full of what needs to be done tomorrow. But the morning doesn't start well. One of the kids is sick. You can't find the car keys. The car won't start. An accident has backed up traffic for miles and now you are late. At work, the internet is down. The copy machine is out of toner. The phone rings non stop. There are days like this. For the apostles, hoping in the boat and going to the other side was nothing. But it was on that day.

Second, bad days require more prayer and spiritual focus and intensity. It's easy when things are running smoothly to skip through some of our spiritual habits. But when the day is in a ditch, we sure need more prayer, more Jesus and more help. We know that even through those long, dark valleys of death, God is with us. He leads us. He comforts us. He is our help and our refuge.

(OVER)

The good thing about bad things is that they tend to make us pray harder and longer than we normally do.

Third, it's in those bad days that we learn so much. James tells us to count it a blessing when we go through trials. Hard and difficult as they may be, we tend to learn more during those seasons than we do when everything is going well for us. Lessons such as patience, humbleness, priorities all come to the front when we are having a bad day. Going through bad days makes us realize how many good days that we took for granted and how many times we were not all that thankful when we should have been.

Fourth, even in the bad days, God expects us to walk with Him and live up to what He tells us to do. No passes are given and no exemptions are made because we are tired, stressed, worried and bothered about life. God doesn't give us a day off from letting our light shine and being the disciple that we are supposed to be. If we only were required to be faithful on the good days, when the sun is shining, then our hearts and character quickly become inconsistent. The ole' saying, "I'll be there Lord willing, if the creeks don't rise." Well, if they do rise, get you a boat! If they do rise, swim across. Don't fall into the easy habit of only walking with the Lord when you feel like it. There will be many days when you don't feel like it. You may not feel like it physically. You may not feel like it emotionally. You may not feel like it spiritually. Yet, still, onward you will go. You will continue to do what is right, because that is the right thing to do. You will worship, even when you do not feel like it. You will be an encourager when you don't want to. You will be a servant, even when you think it's time for others to serve you.

Another storm in night. Another rocky boat ride. Another fearful journey. Jesus comes. He comes walking. They get more scared. Some think the Lord is a ghost. Jesus speaks. "It is I." That's all they need to hear. His voice. His presence. He's calmed storms before. He's sent demons running before. He's raised the dead before. It is I—which means He is here. It means everything will be ok. It means my heart can settle down.

Bad days happen. But they don't have to be "bad." Inconvenient. Uncomfortable. Difficult. Challenging. Schedule changing. But as long as the Lord is near, it will never be bad.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)