



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)

January 14, 2024

Jump Start # 3178

Ecclesiastes 3:2 "A time to give birth and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted."

Last week I had a most unusual event. I married a young couple from our congregation. They come from great families and are devoted disciples. It was so encouraging. As soon as the ceremony was over, I had to skip the reception, catch a flight to another city so I could preach the funeral the next morning of a dear disciple of the Lord. How those two events were woven together in my mind. A young couple beginning and a journey ended. Till death do us part, that seems light years away, to the reality of death parting us.

Our verse today, found from what is commonly called the seasons of life, Solomon in these series of fourteen couplets, opposites, paints for us what life looks like. It's beginnings and endings. It's finding and losing. It's good times and sad times. It's war and it's peace. It's weeping and it's laughing. And, that's exactly what life is. It's not a choice. It's not one or the other, it's both.

Some lessons for us:

First, we must rejoice in the seasons of sunshine and joy. So much to be thankful for. Good health. Great friends. Amazing church. Blessings too many to be counted. It's during the sunshine that we must build our foundation upon the Lord. We know all too well, that the clouds will row in. We know that storms are on the horizons. The season of sunshine doesn't last every day. There are some dark days and troublesome nights. Now, we can live in fear dreading those things or we can be productive now and thankful for what we have.

Second, our culture doesn't do well with the hardships of life. Our times only wants happiness. Nothing sorrowful. Nothing to reflect upon. But all sunshine makes a desert. Life needs rain to grow. Perpetual laughing through life neglects the times God tells us to be sober. Even at funerals these days, there is little seriousness. We now call those events, "celebrations of life," which is a nice way to say, ignore the obvious that one has died among us. Let's laugh, eat, drink and have a good time. No lessons learned. Nothing gained. Just another party to attend. Noah saw the door shut on the ark. Shadrach saw the flames of fire. Daniel was tossed into a lion's den. Peter saw prison doors close. There was a stone rolled in front of our Lord's tomb.

(OVER)

It's troubling that so many do not want to think about serious things. They want a pill to take away all pain and they want anything negative removed from their life. If someone questions them, they are quickly shut out and removed from their life. And as a society, we have not learned how to deal with adversity. Our parents and grandparents had both a worldwide depression and a worldwide war going on. Faith was strong. For us, a pandemic was all it took to crush the faith in some. Life is birth and death. Life is finding things and losing things. Life is embracing and shunning, as Solomon painted it.

Third, what we are made of determines how we will handle the harshness of life. One doesn't get to choose from Solomon's list. When a couple stands before the preacher and the "in sickness and in health, for riches or poverty" words are spoken, those are not choices. We get both. We get what happens to us. For some, the rains come early. For others, it's a long season of sunshine.

What we are made of shapes our heart and builds our character during those seasons. The more the Lord is in our lives the more we will do well during those seasons of darkness and trouble. The heroes of Hebrews 11 all suffered in different ways. They had to make great choices based upon the Lord. They had to trust the Lord when it was hard. The Lord tells us that when we act upon His words, a solid foundation is established. The wind and the rains come, even to believers. Yet, the promise of Jesus is that our house will stand. Our faith in the Lord is stronger than the storms. The storms will pass. What remains is what we have in the Lord. For some, it's a collapsed faith that didn't do well. For others, their heart, character and faith remain solid. The storms were intense, but God is greater.

A wedding and a funeral...just hours apart. A beginning and an ending. Tears of joy and tears of sorrow. The best day for some and the worst day for others. That's simply life. And, with the Lord we can do well in both, the sunshine and the rain.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)
