



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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Mark 5:19 "And He did not let him but He said to him, 'Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.'"

Our verse today comes at the end of the powerful miracle of Jesus when He cast legions of demons into pigs and then the pigs rushed into the sea and drowned. There were 2,000 pigs that died. The demon possessed man, described vividly as naked, bloody, and crazed. He would scream. He was living in a cemetery. But he encountered Jesus. Now, sitting down, clothed and reasonable and sensible, this man illustrates layers and layers of change in his life.

Now, demon free, this man wants to go with Jesus. Who wouldn't? But that wasn't the plan Jesus had for him. "Go home," is what the Lord told him. Go home to your people and tell them what the Lord has done. And, right here, in these simple words, we have one of the first examples of evangelism. Oh, the things this once possessed man likely didn't know. I doubt he could explain the concept of the trinity. Predestination, sanctification, the role of shepherds, the ending of spiritual gifts, the second coming, maybe even Jesus' resurrection, major themes in our Bibles, yet, very likely he didn't have a clue about those things. He had not sat in a 13 week Bible class about personal evangelism. He didn't have a handful of tracts to pass out.

But what we see is that this is one of the very first persons that Jesus allowed to tell the story. Most often, before this and even after this, Jesus would say, "Do not tell." Here, go home to your people and tell them. And, this simple story ought to rock our theories about evangelism. Maybe we've made it too complicated. Maybe we have spent so much time defining and defeating Calvinism, Premillennialism, Catholicism, humanism and any other "ism" that we can come up with that people just don't know where to start. Go home to your people. I like that. Our people know us. Our people have seen us grow up. Our people have seen us change. If we can't talk to our people, how will we ever talk to a stranger?

(OVER)

Consider some thoughts here:

First, this demon possessed man would certainly look differently than what he once was. Had any of his family seen him during the possessed years, he was naked, bloody and screaming. Not now. Those days are over. And, for you and I, it may not be naked and bloody, but drunk and high. Or, it may be broke and jobless. Or, it may be selfish and obscene. Or, immodest and cursing. Or, dishonest and lying. And, what our families ought to notice immediately is that we are not that way anymore. Decent. Kind. Thankful. Selfless. Helpful. Godly. They ought to see a change in us.

Second, there is a good chance that the possessed man's family never heard of Jesus. So, their impression of Jesus was going to come from the image that the possessed man presented to them. And, that is just the same for us. Much too often we want to first talk about the church, rather than Jesus. We talk about how nice services are. We brag about our friends at church. We talk about all children at church. But in all of that, where is Jesus? It is not the church that has changed us, but Jesus. The one who has done great things for us is Jesus. The way we present Jesus is the image that many in our family will have. Make sure you color the right picture for them.

Third, the message that the possessed man would offer was to be personal. Tell your people what great things the Lord has done for YOU. Not for Israel. Not in the past. But for you. Some would want to call this a testimonial and then make this much more than what it is. He simply told his family how Jesus drove the demons out of him. This wasn't done on a Sunday morning before the church. This took place at home, among his people. We may not be able to find a bunch of verses, but we ought to be able to tell someone how the Lord has changed our lives. We ought to see the blessings of the Lord in our lives. In the hymn, Amazing Grace, we find, "I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind but now I see." Simple. God has made my life better. Can you tell that to a co-worker? Can you tell that to your siblings?

What has the Lord done for you? Don't make your answer lofty, big and dotting every "I" and crossing every "T". Make it personal. What has the Lord done for you?

Evangelism is the only mechanism that the church grows. There is no other way. Every person, in every house, on every street, in every city, in every nation, on every continent needs to hear the message of Jesus. It begins by going home. Tell your family. That's a starting place.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)
