



# THE EXHORTER

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***"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](http://prchurchofchrist.org))

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**Luke 12:20 "But God said, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'"**

Our verse today is the shocking news that the farmer in Jesus' parable heard from Heaven. The man was prosperous. He knew how to grow crops. He was industrious, hard working and thinking about the future. He had positioned himself to be able to expand his storage. His intentions were to tear down his existing barns and build larger barns. This was to be his retirement. After the construction of the new barns, he was going to slow down. His words were, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." One more big project before he heads into retirement.

But in the parable, something happened that he had not anticipated. He didn't figure on dying, at least not at this point in his life. He was counting on more time and more years. He had worked hard so he could enjoy it. God had other plans. And, with the harshest word ever used in the Bible, this farmer is called a fool. The Psalms tells us that the fool is one who says there is no God. The contrast is sharp in the book of Proverbs between the wise and the fool.

Why did God call him a fool? Because he was one. He lived as if God never existed. He lived as if he was in control of the universe and had his life in the palms of his hands. He didn't. He never did. God is in control. Each day is a gift from Heaven. And, with that, God asks this farmer one question: who is going to own what you have prepared? The farmer was not going to enjoy the fruit of his labor. The farmer was not going to see the benefits of his work. Someone else would take over, move in, and enjoy all good stored up for many years. The farmer worked it, but someone else would benefit from it.

Many sermons have pointed out how many times in this short parable that the farmer refers to himself. Me, myself and I, seem to be the most important things in this man's life. Making plans wasn't wrong. Expansion isn't wrong. Retiring isn't wrong. Even enjoying the fruits of our labor is something Solomon talked about a long time ago in Ecclesiastes.

This farmer had a disease that is most dangerous to Christians. It's not a medical problem but a spiritual problem. It can't be cured by medicine, only by faith. The farmer was a practical atheist. That's the most deadly form of atheism. It's often found in the heart of folks that go to Sunday worship. You won't find these folks sending a check to the National Atheism Foundation. They are not posting anti-god statements on Facebook and Twitter. They aren't saying unkind and blasphemous things about God. They haven't written books supporting the theories of evolution. No, practical atheism is the hardest spiritual disease to detect. On the surface and in the minds of those who have this, they are Christians. They would admit that they love the Lord and believe in Him. Many have been baptized. Many own a Bible. Many will be found in church on Sunday. In theory, it seems that they are doing everything that believers do and are showing that they oppose atheism.

(OVER)

The difference is found in day to day living. Just like this farmer in Jesus' parable. The plans do not include God. The language never thanks God. They live as if there will always be a tomorrow and they live as if everything they plan will come about. Their practical, everyday life, is without God. And, that is practical atheism. No prayers. No reading the Bible. No thankfulness. Completely secular. Completely earth bound. Completely living as if everything they dream and plan will be, just because they dreamed it and planned it.

The shocking thing about this parable is that it can mirror our lives so easily and quickly. We get so busy shopping, going to meetings at work, taking care of the house and the pets and the kids, watching some TV here and there and each day looks like the last one, and it that, God can't be found.

Maybe this is one of the greatest benefits of Wednesday evening Bible classes. Mid-week. Between Sundays. A gentle reminder of what the farmer forgot, God. Get together and open God's word. Get together and bow our heads to God. Get together and encourage one another spiritually. The word is taught. God is praised. Our hearts are encouraged. And, before we realize it, God is placed back in the center where He belongs.

With God at the center, we realize that death comes. We realize that following death is a judgment. We realize our choices, everyday, even today, can make all the difference in eternity.

Sometimes it's hard to get out for Wednesday evening services. It's dark this time of the year. It's cold. You've gotten home and your body just wants to stay home. It's tempting. Just wrap yourself up in a warm blanket, put on a ballgame or a holiday movie and stay in. Block out the world, the troubles and lose yourself for a few minutes in rest. Boy, that sounds wonderful doesn't it. But right there, so simply, we've pushed God out of the picture. Not on purpose. Not because we are mean. We just didn't think about that. We don't think about that little old widow, who with her walker will be at church services tonight. She's there and we are home wrapped up in our blanket. That seems backwards. We don't think about that family with small children who will be out at services tonight. All the coats, hats, bags that they bring. You'd think they were traveling to the Alps with all the stuff they carry in. Yet, they will be there.

And, it shouldn't be the guilt that drives us to the church building on a Wednesday evening. Being there because we have to be there doesn't do anyone, especially ourselves, any good. No, it's not the guilt, but it's the fact that I can stand right with Jesus' farmer so easily. It's the thought that I can go through a day without any thought of God and it doesn't seem to bother me. It's the thought that I can become so secular that practical atheism is a part of my world. Have I forgotten that everything that I enjoy around me is a gift from the Lord? Have I forgotten that the very talents that I have are given to me by the Lord? Have I forgotten that I need to feed my soul every day? Have I forgotten that I need encouragement to keep me from becoming like Jesus' farmer? Have I forgotten that my presence at Wednesday Bible classes helps others?

No, it's not guilt that gets us out of a warm house on a dark Wednesday night. It's the need, the benefits, the reminders, and the communion with God.

The farmer in Jesus' parable from what we are told, wasn't a "bad" person. He was a good farmer. He wasn't caught stealing, fixing prices, cheating others, on in bed with a neighbor's wife. None of those things come from the story. He was simply a farmer who benefited from the rain that God sent and the sun that was a gift from Heaven and the agricultural principles that God established to be successful but who never gave God any credit nor did he ever consider that each day could be his last.

And, so it is with us. We walk among the blessings of God every day. Each day, we are closer to our last day. The sadness in Jesus' parable is not that the farmer died. The farmer ignored God. He lived as a practical atheist. That's the shame of this parable.

Wednesday evening, good time to show myself and the Lord that I am a believer!

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

**(Editors note:** Although we don't meet at the church building on Wednesday nights,(due to the fact that many members cannot drive at night anymore, and with everyone living a great distance from the building and hard to get there due to the traffic situation at this time) we still have bible studies going on for everyone to attend. If you have a computer or a cell phone you can join our bible study on ZOOM. Just download the app on your device and you can be a part of this study.(See Joe Stuve for Zoom meeting info.) If you prefer to attend a study in person, there is a study going on at the Zuniga's house on Wed. nights. Just see Ramiro or Jim Rice to be a part of that study. Come and share an hour of bible study with brethren in the middle of the week and keep your faith growing!!!!)