

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: TO HIM THAT HATH SHALL BE GIVEN

Scripture: Mark 4:21-25

And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? And not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was anything kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given, and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning. (Proverbs 9:9)

A pithy and ungrammatical old proverb says, "Them as has, gits." This is a somewhat cynical way of saying that when a man has money or property, he makes more money. It is frequently true that the man who has learned to manage his finances to the point where he has saved and accumulated a little nest egg, is able to take advantage of an opportunity to make more money, while the man who has never learned to be thrifty, economical, or saving, spends himself poorer and poorer and envies the man who always seems to have money enough to snap up a bargain.

On the other hand, there is another old proverb which says that it is only three generations from overalls to overalls. One thrifty laborer in overalls begins to amass a fortune. He passes it on to his son, who has some idea of the labor that has gone into that accumulation. The son takes fairly good care of it and increases it. But when the fortune is eventually handed on to the grandson, he squanders it, and eventually finds himself back in overalls working for a living just as his grandfather did.

The wise management of money and material wealth trains a man to handle larger and yet larger quantities of wealth. In the parables of the pounds and the talents, the man who did nothing with his one pound or one talent lost it, and it was given to the man with five, who had used his assets to make a 100% increase and had thereby increased his capacity to use wealth. Each of these par-

ables concludes with the saying which we have selected for discussion in this sermon: "To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

We are not primarily concerned, however, with the application of this saying to money or material wealth. In the setting of our scripture reading from the 4th chapter of Mark, and its parallel passage in the 13th chapter of Matthew, this saying (which may very well have been an ancient rabbinical proverb) grows out of a discussion of Jesus' use of parables. The emphasis is not on the accumulation of material wealth, but on the increase of spiritual perception. The disciples asked Jesus why he used so many parables in his teaching. His reply was that unto them -- the disciples -- it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, but unto them that were outside the kingdom the parables would be only meaningless riddles. Men who had a willingness and a faith to believe, and who had cultivated a capacity to hear and understand would quickly grasp the truths taught by parables. But others would neither hear, nor see, nor understand.

Some of the "mystery cults" have sought to make this an excuse for keeping the gospel of Christ a mystery which can be known only to a select and intelligent few. This was not Jesus' intention. The fault was in the perceptive capacity of those who heard, not in the parables. The

great moral and spiritual truths which Jesus taught were set in parables as a candle is set upon a candlestick that it might give light to all that are in the house. It was not Jesus' intention to hide those truths as a candle might be hid under a bushel, or under a bed, but to set them up for all men to see. If the parables are hard to understand, the fault is not with the parables, but with men.

Any faculty grows as it is used. Most of us use only a fraction of the mental and spiritual capacities which God has given us. To use a personal illustration, I have always found mathematics hard and distasteful. I have found little or no necessity for it in my type of work. My experience with figures is pretty much confined to adding up my monthly accounts and tabulating my income tax. When I was in school I was required to do a certain amount of mathematics. By the use of much concentration and study I found that I could do mathematical problems - not so rapidly as some, but better than many others. I studied algebra, geometry, calculus, and trigonometry, and made a passing grade. But now I haven't looked at or used any of those subjects for over thirty years, and I couldn't work a simple problem in algebra if my life depended on it. I never really "had" mathematics; my possession of it was only superficial. Now I find that "he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath." My ability to understand mathematics is gone.

On the other hand, some of my friends who have no trouble with mathematics wonder where I find so many sermon subjects and sermon illustrations. Because that has been my principal responsibility over the years, I have developed the faculty of searching out good illustrations, and recognizing them and making application of them to moral and spiritual truth when I see them, and I see perfectly easily and naturally what other men as easily pass by without seeing at all. And so it is with many men.

A man who exercises his muscles increases his strength. A man who develops his musical ability and keeps up his practice will become proficient as a musician, and increase his capacity to perform progressively more difficult musical works. A man who studies, increases his capacity to learn and to understand what he learns. A man who cultivates the presence of God develops his capacity to know God. A man who studies human nature with sympathy and under-

standing increases his capacity to know and understand human nature. A man who studies his Bible in a sincere and open-minded effort to discern its spiritual truths, develops his spiritual perception. A man who receives and applies the spiritual truths and perceptions already recorded in scripture will be prepared to receive more. But the man who never really makes the truths of Scripture his, giving them only superficial acceptance, will lose even what he thinks he has, and will sooner or later find his mind unable to grasp and comprehend even the simplest truths of God.

Our growth in any capacity is measured by our diligence. With what measure we mete, it is measured to us again. If we are stingy with our exercise, God and the laws of Nature will necessarily be stingy in giving us muscular strength. If we are stingy in study, we shall find God necessarily stingy in giving us the gifts of wisdom and of knowledge -- not because he is ungenerous, but because our lack of diligence limits our capacity to receive. When men listen for the voice of God as it is expressed through his scriptures, and as it is expressed through his modern prophets, apostles, and servants, they cultivate the capacity to hear. Then, when they need more, God can speak, and they have the capacity to receive, to hear, to understand, and to profit by God's counsel and guidance.

Many otherwise good people lack this capacity to receive more. Today, as always, it is true that "my people perish for lack of knowledge." Too often people who are otherwise morally good lack the intellectual, the spiritual, and the moral perception which would open to them whole areas of knowledge and enable them to do great things for the kingdom of God. George Washington was killed by a perfectly pious, respectable, kindly, well-meaning physician who bled him to cure his pneumonia. Too often our efforts to establish the kingdom are similarly bungled by people who mean well, but who simply don't know what to do, because their lack of capacity makes them blind to the obvious truth which is waiting to burst upon them in all its glory. Only the willing hearing, receiving, and applying of the truth already being proclaimed can entitle us to receive more. "He that hath, to him shall be given; and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath." "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning."

