

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

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World Headquarters: The Auditorium, Independence, Missouri

Program Number 150  
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The Sermon: MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE

Scripture: Matthew 4:1-4 (Inspired Version)

Then Jesus was led up of the Spirit, into the wilderness, to be with God. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, and had communed with God, he was afterwards an hungered, and was left to be tempted of the devil. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But Jesus answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

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Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for  
the meat which endureth unto everlasting life.

One of the petitions which Jesus included in the prayer he taught us to pray is "Give us this day our daily bread." Bread is not unimportant. Men have to eat to live; the danger is that they should live to eat. It is not beneath the dignity of God to provide for the daily physical needs of his children. Jesus pointed out that God does feed the birds of the air and clothe the lilies of the field, and taught us to trust in him for those physical things which we need day by day. Jesus was mindful of the physical needs of his chosen twelve, and of the multitudes which often followed him. He stoutly defended the action of the disciples in rubbing out grain in their hands on the Sabbath day in order to satisfy their hunger. He performed the miracle of the loaves and the fishes to feed the five thousand. He made the feeding of the hungry one of the distinguishing marks of the sheep who were to be on the right hand of God in the judgment day, and neglect of this duty one of the marks of the goats on his left.

The kingdom of God is concerned then with whether or not men have bread. Economic righteousness cannot be separated from spiritual righteousness, for one cannot exist without the other. But bread is not the chief concern of the kingdom. Bread sustains physical life while men acquire and develop spiritual life. Bread is a means, not an end. When it becomes the end of living, men forget the spiritual kingdom in lust and gluttony.

The setting for today's short scripture lesson is the conclusion of Jesus' forty days in the wilderness, where he had been led by the Spirit for the final preparation necessary before entering upon his ministry. Just previous to those forty days he had been baptized in Jordan by John the Baptist, and the voice from heaven had said "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Naturally enough, the temptation at the end of those forty days of privation and fasting and loneliness in the wilderness took the form to which Jesus might have been expected to be most susceptible. The voice had said he was the Son of God. If he was, he had power to make bread out of stones. Jewish tradition had taught for many centuries that one mark of the Messiah's reign would be an abundance of food and a miraculous fertility of the soil which would provide more than enough for every man to eat. Jesus was hungry. He knew that other men in his barren little country where every drop of rain and every morsel of bread was precious, were also hungry, and that the grinding taxes of Rome kept them always so. He knew that if he used his miraculous powers to produce bread for himself and for the other hungry citizens of Palestine, that they would hail him immediately and enthusiastically as the Messiah, come to usher in the golden age of peace and miraculous plenty.

An indication of what might have happened is found in the events which followed the feeding of the five thousand.

The people were so obsessed with the idea that such miraculous production of bread would solve all their problems, that they tried to take Jesus by force and make him a king. He eluded them, and went apart into a mountain alone. When the disciples found him next day, followed by the still eager multitude, he said, "Ye seek me, not because ye desire to keep my sayings, neither because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man hath power to give unto you."

Suppose Jesus had yielded to this temptation, and had satisfied his own hunger and won his followers by miraculously supplying them with bread. He would have won a quick and a large following, but they would have been the same people. They would have continued unconcernedly in their old sins. Economic and political and social injustice would still have prevailed. The powerful and the selfish would still have tried to get more for themselves at the expense of less for everybody else. No one would have been made fit for the kingdom. No one would have been devoted to Jesus as Master, as Teacher, as Lord, as Savior, as Redeemer, but only as bread-giver. The same sort of devotion was bought by Nero not many years later with his policy of "bread and circuses." That is not the way to bring the kingdom of God to earth, or into the hearts and lives of men.

Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Bread is important, but it is not the end of life, nor is it even the principal aim of life. The end and aim of life should be to live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. God's words are many. It is by his word that the worlds were formed. It is by his word that we receive sun and rain and seedtime and harvest. It is by his word that the law was given to Israel. It is by his word that Jesus was sent into the world to give the higher law, and to demonstrate the possibility of living it in the flesh. It is by God's word that the instincts of righteousness and justice are planted in the consciences of men. It is by God's word that the prophets speak. And that word "proceedeth" (present tense) from the mouth of God continually, day by day, ordering his universe and our world, sus-

taining our lives with food, giving us new light and truth and inspiration for our spiritual guidance.

The danger is always that man will concentrate on one word, and ignore all the others. Some men dwell on the words of the past, but deny the possibility that the word of God still comes to men. Some men thoughtlessly accept the word of God which miraculously calls forth the fruit of tree and vine and field in its season, but forget the word of God concerning their spiritual duties to him, and ignore the Word which was incarnate in human flesh for the redemption of fallen men. God's provisions for the needs of men through his word are many, and are perpetual. Man's duty is to live by every word, not by one or two which he may select as easy, convenient, or obvious.

It should be noted that when Jesus was confronted with this temptation, he referred to scripture: "It is written," His quotation comes from the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, in which Israel is counselled to remember "All the commandments which I command ye this day." They were reminded that it was the word or power of God which delivered them from Egypt, which fed them with manna in the wilderness, which brought water out of a rock to slake their thirst. Remembering these things, the people might also be constrained to remember that when they were dissatisfied with these things and clamored for meat in addition to manna, they got meat, but with it a plague which carried away many of the unthankful and rebellious. They were warned that they must live by every word of God, in order that when they got to the land of promise, and built goodly houses, and multiplied flocks and herds, gold and silver, and food and raiment, they should not be tempted to lift up their hearts in pride and say: "My power, and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth." When men are fat and sleek and well fed, they usually forget God. Great civilizations disappear not when they are starved out, but when they degenerate because of luxury and plenty, with no thought of obedience to the more important words of God by which men live above and beyond a mere animal existence. If our civilization is to endure, we must learn to live by every word that proceedeth (present tense) from the mouth of God, to live by the bread of heaven as well as by the bread of the baker's shop.