

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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Evan A. Fry, Radio Minister
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The Sermon: THE SOLEMNITIES OF ETERNITY

Scripture: I Thessalonians 5:1-10

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night, and they that be drunken are drunken in the night; But let us, who are the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds.
Be sober. (Doctrine and Covenants 43:8)

A little nonsense now and then is re-
lished by the best of men. We all enjoy
a good joke at the proper time and place.
The wise writer of Proverbs observed that
"a merry heart doeth good like a medicine."
For quite some time I have been person-
ally certain that God himself must have a
wonderful sense of humor. I don't know
how else he could still be patient with
all the funny characters he has created
to inhabit this earth. Jesus was a man
of good humor. The common people heard
him gladly. He was a good story-teller.
He was a welcome guest at weddings and
friendly dinner parties. Few of his hu-
morous stories have been preserved to us,
since the gospel writers had more serious
things to record, but who can read Jesus'
hyperbolically exaggerated story of the
man who strained out a little gnat and
swallowed a camel without detecting a rare
sense of humor?

Humor is not wrong; but it takes men
who are serious, sober, grave, and earn-
est, as well as witty, to get the world's
work done. There are certain solemnities
which must be observed in time, if one
would achieve success or happiness in any
endeavor. No one can be flippant, care-
less, or unconcerned about the laws of
mathematics or physics, and be a good
engineer or architect. He must know the
sober, solemn facts, and apply them. No

one flippant or unconcerned about economic
laws -- no one who treats such laws as a
joke and nothing more -- stays in business
very long. And the same rule might be ap-
plied to almost any trade or profession.

If you went to a doctor to consult
him about a serious operation, you might
appreciate a bit of humor -- a light
touch -- to relieve your tension and
worry, but you would not want to employ a
surgeon who regarded the operation itself
as a joke, who showed no sober sense of
responsibility for your life, who went at
the whole thing lightly, flippantly, play-
fully, jestingly, like a play-boy out for
a rollicking night on the town. You would
insist on employing a surgeon who had more
sober skill and less wit; who took a
greater responsibility and manifested
more concern for his patient.

Solemnity is soberness, earnestness,
gravity, seriousness. A man with these
qualities is no play-boy, though he may
have a wonderful sense of humor. A man
with these qualities accepts his respon-
sibility to God, to his fellow man, and
to himself; he discharges those respon-
sibilities with meticulous care. He can
be trusted. He is dependable, because he
lets the solemnities of time as well as
the solemnities of eternity, rest upon
his soul.

It is characteristic of many of our day never to admit having a sober thought. We live in the age of the wise crack, the pun, and flippant conversation. It is characteristic of our age that our top comedians command a higher salary than the President of the United States, and that they draw their jokes from huge card files of material that are indexed and cross indexed to produce a laugh on any subject imaginable. It is the day of high and low comedy --by movie, by radio, by television. It is the day of comic books, comic strips, light entertainment, pleasant condensed reading. It is the day when we will do anything and pay any amount for a laugh or a thrill. Is it perhaps to cover up the tragedy of our inner restlessness and uncertainty that our generation is so obsessed with comedy?

There are certain solemnities that must be observed in time. There are also certain solemnities of eternity. The word of the Lord through Joseph Smith to men living in time was, "Let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds. Be sober." There are many such solemnities. Who are we? Where did we come from? (Eternity stretches endlessly into the infinite past as well as into the infinite future.) Where are we going? Is there life beyond this? What kind of life is it? What is our relationship to God, to Christ? And what is their relationship to our eternal life?

The man whose every thought and act is trivial, flippant, irresponsible, unconcerned, is not bothered about such questions. He says that the future life cannot be proved. Certainly it cannot be proved to a flippant, wisecracking, indifferent man, any more than the existence of unseen galaxies of stars could be proved to one too busy, too lazy, too unconcerned or too busy making wisecracks to make a telescope and look through it. It is the astronomer who has something of the solemnity and soberness of the heavens resting heavily upon his mind and heart who believes, seeks, searches, studies, builds telescopes, finds, and knows. It is the man who lets the solemnities of eternity rest upon his soul, - the man who believes, searches, studies, and prays, who knows of God, of Christ, of immortality.

Some people take the attitude that this life is a only time to have fun. "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." "Life is short and time is

fleeting." We'll find out about eternity -- if there is any -- soon enough. This is not the attitude of the sober, serious, earnest person. We live in eternity now, standing on a small promontory of time between the unknown abyss of the past, and the unknown abyss of the future. Time is only a small segment of eternity. The vaster arc of eternity is endless, but for us the time of probation in this life is not. Every moment of time is precious. The use we make of every moment of time is significant of how we would use eternity if we had it. If we waste the moments of eternity granted to us in the probation of this life, we have proved ourselves incapable and unworthy of using the larger blessings and opportunities of eternity. Now, in this life, we need to let the solemnities of eternity rest upon our souls, lest when eternity comes in its fullness we find that the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and our souls are not saved.

One of the signs of maturity is the ability to plan for the future, and to deny one's self present good in order that greater good may be obtained in the future. It is characteristic of the infant -- whether he be young or old in calendar years -- that he wants what he wants when he wants it, with no delay and no denial. Maturity takes the long view; considers whether the gratification of a momentary desire will contribute to the long range objective or purpose which has been set up. If a young teen ager has seriously and soberly determined to go to college, he will weigh the purchase of every candy bar and every ticket to the movies against that long range objective. Shall he enjoy himself now, doing what will bring momentary pleasure, or save his money for a greater but future good?

Letting the solemnities of eternity rest upon our minds is simply taking the long view. It is a sign of the emotionally and spiritually mature. Our actions in the trivia of everyday living express our philosophy of eternity. They show what we consider to be important and unimportant in life. It is well that we should be cheerful, have a good sense of humor, enjoy a good joke at the proper time and place; but we should not let the pleasures, amusements, duties, and cares of the present blind us to the solemn implications of eternity. The children of light should be so spiritually mature, so dedicated to the long, eternal view of life, that they are always watchful and sober, as well as happy and cheerful.