

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

This sermon script is furnished with
the good wishes of the Reorganized Church
of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

World Headquarters: The Auditorium, Independence, Missouri

Program Number 197
Evan A. Fry, Radio Minister
All Rights Reserved

The Sermon: IN TEMPORAL THINGS BE EQUAL

Scripture: Doctrine and Covenants 38:5,6.

Let every man esteem his brother as himself, and practice virtue and holiness before me. And again I say unto you, Let every man esteem his brother as himself: for what man among you having twelve sons, and is no respecter to them, and they serve him obediently, and he saith unto the one, Be thou clothed in robes and sit thou here; and to the other, Be thou clothed in rags and sit thou there, and looketh upon his sons and saith, I am just. Behold this I have given unto you a parable, and it is even as I am: and I say unto you, Be one; and if ye are not one, ye are not mine

If ye are not equal in earthly things, ye can not be equal in obtaining heavenly things.

The Declaration of Independence asserts that all men are created free and equal, meaning that all men are equal before God. God is no respecter of persons. He does not love or favor one man or one race above another. His laws are the same for all; his justice is the same for all; his salvation is the same for all.

If these things be true, then it follows that every man has equal claim with every other man on the natural resources of earth -- on the good things which God has placed here for man's comfort, sustenance, and enjoyment. Then why did not God arrange things so that there would be an equal geographical distribution of the world's natural resources? Why does he permit inequality by having some men born with physical or mental handicaps, while other men are born with the physical and mental equipment of genius? There is no easy and final answer to those questions; but we do know that oftentimes these seeming inequities are the direct or indirect result of man's doings -- not God's. And always the devout, God-fearing man who is motivated by love for God and for fellow man can use these seeming inequities as a means of self-discipline and spiritual development, as he shares his blessings with those less fortunate, and renders to them the service which his greater wealth, greater strength, or greater talents make possible.

Men who are equal in the sight of God have a right to expect and demand equal opportunity. This sort of equality, like all other equality, is relative ra-

ther than absolute. It is geared to a man's aptitudes, talents, capacities, and needs. It would be foolish and unequal, for example, to require every university student to take a course in advanced oil painting in the name of equality. Some have no talent for painting, and would rather study engineering, music, or medicine. Some would rather be carpenters or mechanics or bricklayers. Equality of opportunity does not mean that every man must receive an equal and identical training, but rather that each man should have an equal opportunity with every other man to achieve to the utmost of his capacity, according to his natural gifts and talents and desires.

Inequality is inequity, and inequity is iniquity; all three words come from the same word roots. If one man, one race, or one nation selfishly hoards the abundance which God has placed in their keeping to be shared, then that man or race or nation is guilty of inequity and sin -- the sin of denying equality of opportunity to others. A passage from the book of Doctrine and Covenants says: "It is not given that one man should possess that which is above another; wherefore the world lieth in sin." Inequality is inequity, inequity is iniquity, and iniquity is sin.

When we talk of equality, we often think in terms of absolute equality -- in terms of dividing up the wealth so that we all can grab something from the rich man. "Share the wealth" programs based on this idea of "soaking the rich" always

impoverish men, rather than enriching them, because the man who expects to get rich by taking from someone else never makes any contribution of his own to the economic or spiritual wealth of the world. Some equality is just and right, if it is caused by differing degrees of industry, diligence, application, thought, planning, and preparation. Absolute equality of wealth is meaningless and impossible unless there is also an absolute equality of responsibility and of effort. "The idler shall not eat the bread or wear the garments of the laborer." If the rich man is obligated to share his wealth, the poor man is likewise obligated to share to the limits of his ability in the labor and the responsibility for producing wealth.

The Doctrine and Covenants illustrates this with two parallel and adjoining passages. The first says, "Woe unto you rich men, that will not give your substance to the poor.." The second says: "Woe unto you poor men, whose hearts are not broken, whose spirits are not contrite, and whose hands are not stayed from laying hold upon other men's goods, whose eyes are full of greediness, who will not labor with their own hands!" (56:5)

If men are not willing to be equal in responsibility and in effort, then it is fitting and proper that there should be inequality in reward. If a man works hard, saves his money, denies himself momentary pleasure, and studies for long years to prepare himself for a profession, he is entitled to a greater reward than some other man who has loafed his way through life, spent his time and his money in riotous living, and neglected the equal opportunities that were offered him. It would be unequal, inequitable, and iniquitously unjust to give each of these two types of men an absolutely equal reward.

Men who believe in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man recognize an obligation to help those who have an unequal share of life's necessities and good things because of circumstances beyond their control -- physical or mental disability, protracted illness, accidents and disasters, or lack of opportunity. Those who are thus handicapped, if they are striving to the best of their ability, have a right to expect that others who share the Christian faith and philosophy

will also share in the material things of life, so that there may be equality in temporal things, with no man who is willing to do his best denied the bounties of a loving heavenly Father. "Let every man esteem his brother as himself, and practice virtue and holiness before me."

"If ye are not equal in earthly things, ye can not be equal in obtaining heavenly things." There can be no true spiritual fellowship, or sharing of the higher spiritual blessings, unless there is a sharing in temporal things -- a sharing not only of wealth, but of responsibility and of effort. Imagine a group of people met together for the purpose of worship -- some rich, some poor, under conditions which make their inequality inequity and sin. The poor man's worship and even his service to God will be impeded by envy, jealousy, resentment, and probably cupidity and greed. The rich man's worship will be impeded by fear of the poor man, by callousness and indifference as he justifies his superior wealth, and eventually by hatred of the man he fears. Under these conditions there can be no spiritual fellowship with each other or with God. Inequality in temporal things guarantees poverty and inequality in spiritual things. "In your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly; otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld." (70:3)

The man who selfishly and callously hoards his wealth, or his talent, strength, time, energy, education, or what-not -- who spends it only on himself, would also selfishly hoard God's spiritual blessings if he could. He would hoard the message of Jesus, the gospel of salvation, the hope of eternal life. Many of us have a notion that only the best people of wealth and culture will be admitted to God's kingdom. But God has said, "If you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you." (77:1) We prove our worthiness to possess and use the spiritual blessings of eternity by the use we make of our physical and temporal blessings. If we are not willing to be equal in wealth, in opportunity, in responsibility, in labor, we cannot be equal in spiritual things; we cannot expect ever to receive the unstinted riches of God's eternity.