

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: NEEDS AND JUST WANTS

Scripture: Doctrine and Covenants 81:4

And you are to be equal, or in other words, you are to have equal claims on the properties, for the benefit of managing the concerns of your stewardships, every man according to his wants and his needs, inasmuch as his wants are just; and all this for the benefit of the church of the living God, that every man may improve upon his talent, that every man may gain other talents; yea, even an hundred fold, to be cast into the Lord's storehouse, to become the common property of the whole church, every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God.

Appoint unto this people their portion, every man equal according to their families, according to their circumstances, and their wants and needs.

In sermons immediately preceding this one we have said that men should be equal in temporal things, that all things of God's creation are made for the use and benefit of man, and that in using those things as a stewardship, man is accountable. In today's sermon we wish to consider an additional thought, that man's equality with other men should be based on his needs and his wants, inasmuch as his wants are just.

How much do you really need? Civilization has taught us to want many things. But in many cities of Europe during the last war men suddenly found their homes and all their possessions destroyed. With only the clothes on their backs, with only the possessions they could carry in their hands, with food supplies inadequate and uncertain, with new waves of bombers coming over every night to harass and to destroy, with no security of body and no peace of mind, men found out how few are the things actually needed for bare physical survival.

Every man has certain basic physical needs. He needs food and water. He needs a certain amount of sunlight. He needs clothing in keeping with the climate and his environment. He needs a certain amount of shelter from the elements. He needs some tools with which to ply his trade, some implements with which to produce his food, and perhaps some weapons for defense against wild beasts or predatory men. Compared to the endless variety

of things which civilized men actually possess, the basic physical needs of men are quite few and simple.

The needs of the physical body, the basic needs for physical survival, are not the only needs men have, however. There are some basic needs of the spirit as well. Man needs to be at peace with God -- to know God -- to know that God cares for him. Every man needs to have a certain self-respect, a certain human dignity. He needs to feel that he is needed, wanted, loved -- that he is of some use in the world. He needs opportunities for growth, for the cultivation of his talents, his capacities, his potentialities. He needs to be cleansed from the burden and guilt of sin. These needs are just as important and just as essential as the basic physical needs. Man does not live by bread alone, but by the things of the spirit as well.

What is the difference between needs and wants? The two terms as they are popularly used have quite a different meaning. To need is to require supply or relief. The word "need" connotes an urgency, an absolute necessity. To want is popularly construed to mean "to wish or long for." But as far as the dictionary is concerned, to need and to want are almost the same thing. To say that a man is in want means that he is in need. To want is to lack, to be without, to feel or suffer the need of, to require, to need. Fourth in the list of definitions

in my desk dictionary is "to wish or long for." If we understand the full definition of "want" it becomes clear that many of our wants are just, and need to be supplied.

Needs and just wants vary with the individual -- his age, his size, his capabilities, his occupation, his responsibilities. Equality is relative, not absolute. A man who stands six feet six inches in his stocking feet, and who weighs two hundred fifty pounds needs more cloth to make himself a suit than the man who stands about five feet tall, and weighs a good hundred pounds less -- yet equality is served and achieved if each has a suit. A minister or a doctor or a white collar worker needs a different kind of clothing than the garage mechanic, a carpenter, a brick layer, a plumber, or the lumber jack in the northern woods. It might therefore be grossly unequal to issue exactly the same kind of clothes to each man.

A dentist couldn't do his work with a set of carpenter tools. A painter could not do his work with a mechanic's tools and wrenches. The doctor, the engineer, the farmer, and the man who works with his hands all need a different sort of education. The minister, the musician, and the college professor all need different equipment, different books, different forms of recreation. Equality does not mean uniformity. Equality means that every man has what he needs to fulfill his highest capabilities and to perform his mission in life most efficiently.

We all want, wish for, and long for many things we could do without. The wants of an early pioneer settler in a log cabin were simple compared to the wants of an average family today, including such things as a dozen or more electrical appliances, pre-cooked, packaged, and frozen foods, ready-made clothes, gas heat, city water, sewers, telephones, paved highways and automobiles, police and fire protection, and so on. While it might be possible to get along without many of these modern conveniences and still live, God never intended that his people should exist always on the level of a bare subsistence. He has commanded us in modern revelation to repress unnecessary wants in both private and public expenditure. But he has also said that the fullness of the earth is yours. When wants can be supplied to everybody in such a way as to raise the general standard of living, when they become the accepted norm of living, they are just wants.

Daniel Boone didn't need an automobile; you and I do, in order to be at our best efficiency in today's modern world, because today's living is dependent on auto transportation.

"Just wants" for one who recognizes life as a stewardship under God, are those which in their satisfaction do not deprive others of their needs, and which in their satisfaction do not lift one man conspicuously or radically above his fellows. Just wants are those which if satisfied will improve man's efficiency, his ability to serve, and the productivity of his stewardship.

A good steward has a responsibility to labor in his calling or profession, in order that his own needs and just wants may be satisfied. A good steward is not content to live by the labors of others. He expects to supply his own needs insofar as that is possible. He expects to pay for those goods and services which he cannot produce for himself, but for which he must depend upon others. He expects to produce by his own labor some goods or services which will be useful to other men -- which will supply the needs and just wants of other good stewards.

The principal reason for supplying any man's needs and just wants is that he may be efficient in his stewardship, that he may grow and progress to the full extent of his capacity, his talent, his natural endowments, and that by his wise and efficient use of his stewardship he might increase the resources of the group of which he is a part, and raise the standard of living for all who are willing to join him in that group as stewards, equally responsible for producing those things which will supply the needs and just wants of all men. When men have to suffer lack -- when they are compelled to live below their potential, there is a waste of time and talent. Society loses, as well as the man who is in need or in want. It is good business as well as good religion to seek the best interests of your neighbor -- to labor to supply his needs and his just wants, in order that his capacities and talents might in turn be used to produce something that you need and want. When all men have reached the peak of their potentialities, and are working at their best efficiency as stewards under God, doing all with an eye single to the glory of God, giving according to their capacity, receiving according to their needs and just wants, we shall be very near to the kingdom of God on earth.