

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: BE CONTENT

Scripture: Book of Mormon, Alma 15:52-57.

O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people; Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance, and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might be no more sorrow upon all the face of the earth. But behold, I am a man, and do sin in my wish; for I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me. I ought not to harrow up in my desires the firm decree of the just God, for I know that he granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or unto life; yea, I know that he allotteth unto men, yea, decreeth unto them decrees which are unalterable, according to their wills; whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction; Yea, and I know that good and evil have come before all men; or he that knoweth not good from evil is blameless; but he that knoweth good and evil, to him it is given according to his desires; whether he desireth good or evil, life or death, joy or remorse of conscience. Now seeing that I know these things, why should I desire more than to perform the work to which I have been called?

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I ought to be content with the things which the  
Lord hath allotted unto me.

The Christian, above all other people, should be possessed by a certain divine discontent -- a restlessness -- a dissatisfaction with himself, with his neighbors, with his environment, and with the world in which we all live. All of us are far from perfect; all need to be changed for the better. Complacency and the content of self-satisfaction are grievous and besetting sins in many highly imperfect men. There is no room for complacency, individually or collectively, this side of perfection.

To be content with things as they are, when they are not what they ought to be, is dull, brutish, stupid, callous, and sinful. Such content or satisfaction is unworthy of a follower of the God who gave his Only Begotten Son because he loved the world and was concerned about its plight. It is unworthy of a follower of the Son who was so concerned about men that he gave his life on a cross that men might live. Our concern about the sins of the world should of course begin with ourselves and then grow outward to include the world. Someone has said that the difference between a saint and a reformer is that the saint is concerned about his own sins, while the reformer is so concerned about the sins of others that he fails to recognize any of his own.

The world today is full of strife, turmoil, cruelty, suffering, and sin. Love is always concerned about the suffering, and sin. Love is always concerned about the sufferings of other men and the sins and passions which cause those sufferings. And he who is concerned will inevitably feel constrained to do something about it -- to show his concern in action. How far can we go in our concern? How deeply should we be concerned?

There are two kinds of situations which we may be concerned about: first, the situations which we can partly remedy or change, and second, the situations which we are completely powerless to change at all, except perhaps by our prayers. It is futile and senseless and wasteful to worry about situations which we can help. The thing to do there is not to worry, but to help -- to do something to change the situation in ourselves or in our environment which produces the unfortunate or painful results. It is equally futile and senseless and wasteful to worry about the situation which we cannot help. The man of faith leaves such things to God, and even though he does not altogether lose his concern, he does find a certain peace of spirit and a content of soul because he knows that God is

still in control of his universe, and that in his own due time and in his own way, he will make all things right.

Somewhere I have read a story about a noted church man with great responsibilities. One night instead of sleeping he tossed and turned upon his pillow, worrying about conditions in the church and in the world. In the middle of the night the voice of God spoke to him and said, "You may go to sleep now, William. I'll take over the job of running the universe for the rest of the night."

Many of us in our concern for the mistakes and sufferings of others, neglect our own plain and simple duty. We can be so concerned about why God permits certain conditions of sin and suffering to continue, that we forget the thing he has commissioned us to do. We may be so beset by worry and speculation and concern as to why other men behave as they do that we ourselves forget to behave as we ought. God requires certain things of you. Beyond this you cannot go. You are not responsible for what others do; you are not responsible for what God does or doesn't do. You are responsible for the performance of your own duty to the limit of strength and time and means, even in the face of failure and rebuff, not giving up too easily, but not wasting time and energy in worry about what God and other men do or don't do.

We feel a sympathy for Ammon, the prophet whose words we have read earlier in this service from the Book of Mormon. He saw his people slaughtered in fratricidal war, their bodies heaped upon the earth, and he cried out the wish that he could be an angel, that he might cry repentance, with such power that all men would turn to God and that there would be no more sin or sorrow in all the earth. Today, as we view the world's suffering, we too feel constrained to cry out and to wish that we could have supernatural powers to put an end to all wickedness and sorrow. Our first duty, however, is to put an end to the wickedness in ourselves with the help of the power of Jesus Christ which is available to all who will accept it. Then we may begin to work on others, to preach, teach, exhort, reprove, and bear witness of what the power of Christ has done for us. But re-

member, the responsibility for the final decision is always upon those who hear. If they refuse to hear, or refuse to repent after they have heard, that is their responsibility, not ours. We should not cease being concerned; we will not cease to love all men; we will not give up too easily; but we will be content in the assurance that we have done our duty and done it to the best of our time, strength, and ability, and we will leave the rest with God.

Why doesn't God step in and stop the wickedness of the world? The answer is that he cannot without acting in a manner completely foreign to his nature. Either he would have to cancel his laws which decree that certain painful results of suffering shall follow sinful acts, or he would have to deny men their right to choose for themselves, thereby destroying all the basis for judging or evaluating their righteousness. Righteousness which is forcibly imposed from without has no moral value. God grants unto all men according to their desires for good or evil. God does not allow freedom to choose without taking the risk that some may choose to do evil that will drag others into misery and suffering. Suffering as a result of the sins of others is the price that all men pay for freedom to make their own moral choices between good and evil.

Just after Jesus had told Peter that he would die a martyr's death, Peter turned and saw John, the beloved disciple. Perhaps a little stunned by Jesus' prediction, Peter asked: "What shall this man do?" Jesus' reply is most significant. "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

I am not responsible for what God does, or for what others choose or what others do. I am responsible for the duty which God has entrusted to me, for the station in life he has given me, for the talents and faculties and tools he has loaned to me; and "I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me," and use them to the full extent of my time and my mental, spiritual and physical capacity, rather than wishing I had power sufficient to accomplish other tasks that God has not required of me.