

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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Evan A. Fry, Radio Minister
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The Sermon: IN SECRET HAVE I SAID NOTHING

Scripture: John 18:19-23

The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them; behold, they know what I said. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?

There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed;
neither hid, that shall not be known.

Some forms of religion thrive on secrecy and mystery. They gain followers by teaching that they have some special knowledge or some esoteric mystery, some special exclusive oath, covenant, or ordinance which must be kept from the great masses of people, rather than shared with them. Gnosticism, one of the earliest heresies of the Christian church, which was being taught in the days of John and Paul, was such a religion. Having this secret, mysterious, esoteric knowledge was considered even more important among the Gnostics than having faith in Christ, or having love, or sympathy, or understanding, or charity.

Jesus never taught in secret. Every word he ever said was intended to be heard and understood by every man, woman, and child in the world, in every age. His gospel was always something to be shared with everybody else. One of the distinguishing characteristics of his followers was to be that they would go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. The invitation was "Come unto me, all ye that labor ... and I will give you rest." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely!"

On some occasions Jesus did teach privately. With his disciples he withdrew from public places and crowding throngs that he might teach without interruption. But there is a vast difference between teaching privately, and teaching secretly. Jesus never swore the disciples to secrecy before such a private meeting. On the contrary, he specifically charged them

to publish his teachings from the housetops. He warned them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy -- trying to cover up their secret sins and appear better than they were -- "For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid, that shall not be known." Then, as if contrasting his open, free and unconcealed policy, with the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, he said, "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops." Jesus taught in private, but not in secret. His private teachings were to be proclaimed from the housetops. His gospel was to be shared with all men.

The Last Supper was a private meeting, but in no sense was it a secret meeting. The whole Christian world knows what happened there, and commemorates that meeting in the communion of the Lord's supper. Similarly, after the resurrection the disciples met privately with the doors shut for fear of the Jews, but after the meeting they published from the housetops the fact that the resurrected Jesus had met with them there. The Christian church went underground and met privately during the persecutions in Rome, but its doctrines, teachings, beliefs, and ordinances were never kept secret -- always proclaimed abroad to any who would listen.

Jesus said to his disciples, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giv-

etc light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." There is nothing in that kind of teaching to justify secrecy in any of the teachings, doctrines, rituals, ordinances, beliefs, or activities of a Christian, or of any group of Christians. Every act of a Christian should be frankly open, and above-board. It should be of such a character that it can be proclaimed upon the housetops, in the sight of all men. The church of Christ, and his individual followers who comprise the church, are to be as cities set upon a hill for all men to see -- as a candle set upon a candlestick, so that light may be shed abroad to enlighten all men.

John says in I John 1:5 "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Light is of such a nature that it cannot be hid. Some forms of light, such as X ray and cosmic rays, can penetrate even solid metals. The light that is in God is such a light. It is so brilliant, so penetrating, so overpowering that it cannot be endured in its fullness by mortal eyes. That light is in the sun, in the moon, in the stars, in all of God's creation. It is in Jesus, the Son of God, who shielded that light in human flesh that men's eyes might behold it and know what God was like. No man can be denied that light of God, except as he himself refuses to see it or to walk by it. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." (John 3:19-21)

Jesus explicitly warned against those who would seek to make capital of his second coming by making the time or place a mystery known only to a select few. "Therefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold he is in the desert, go not forth: behold he is in the secret chambers, believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the earth, and shineth ever unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matt. 24:26-27) No man

knows the day or the hour of Jesus' second coming, but when he comes it will not be secretly, or mysteriously, or clandestinely, or to a select few, but in such a manner that every man on earth will be aware of it.

Secret rituals, formulas, oaths, and covenants are completely foreign to the nature and spirit of the Christ who ever taught openly, and said nothing in secret -- the Christ who commanded his followers to "Swear not at all, neither by heaven nor by earth" but to "let your communication be yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. The only oath or covenant the Christian needs is a freely acknowledged and openly proclaimed covenant to serve Christ and keep his commandments. The only oath of brotherhood the Christian needs is a resolve and a pledge to his Savior to regard and treat all men as sons of a common Father for whom Christ died. Any other oaths, bonds, covenants, or secret agreements and ceremonies and rituals kept secret and hidden from the world breed distrust, suspicion, narrowness, class distinctions, clannishness, selfishness, and separation.

When Jesus was brought before Annas for preliminary examination, Annas asked him of his disciples and his doctrine. The question seemed innocent, but in reality Annas was trying to trap Jesus into admitting that he had a secret society, perhaps one secretly pledged to the overthrow of Rome, or the deposing of the ruling priestly clique. Jesus appealed to the Jewish law which said that a man might not give testimony in his own cause, unless there were corroborating witnesses. He said, "I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple and in secret have I said nothing. Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them." The Christian would do well to follow Jesus' example -- to ever live openly before the world -- to be as a city set upon a hill, or as a candle set upon a candlestick -- to take no secret oaths or covenants, and to live in expectation of that day when all hidden things shall be manifested, and all secret things be proclaimed abroad.