

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: THOU SHALT NOT BE IDLE

Scripture: Doctrine and Covenants 85:38

See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires; cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another; cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated; and above all things, clothe yourselves with the bonds of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace; pray always, that you may not faint until I come; behold and lo, I will come quickly, and receive you unto myself. Amen.

Thou shalt not be idle; for he that is idle shall not eat the bread or wear the garments of the laborer.

Have you ever tried the experiment of just doing absolutely nothing for an extended period of time? For example, have you ever been flat on your back in bed, unable to read, or listen to radio or television, or to have company? A normal man or woman in such a situation chafes under the restraint, because man is so constituted that he is not truly happy unless he is performing some worthwhile activity -- some work or service. Work was given to Adam and Eve not as a curse, but as a blessing -- as a proper fulfillment of their nature. Yet the ambition of many a disillusioned, unhappy, frustrated personality today is to arrange matters some way so that he will no longer need to work. And one of the crucial problems of today's society is what to do with our older people who have reached retirement age, who have pensions or social security income, but who have nothing to do.

Every man should be busy and productive in some line of useful labor in keeping with his physical and mental capacity. That is not only his duty but his right. Even though a man may have amassed enough wealth to be independent, that still does not give him the right to live without labor. Wealth does not produce more wealth without someone's labor; and no one who is physically and mentally capable of performing some useful task has the moral right to idle away his time while others work to support him in his idleness. This is not to say that retirement is wrong. It is right and proper and just; but it should be the means of releasing men and women from the physical and mental drudgery and routine of the

workaday world, and making them available for other kinds of work which will utilize their skill, their experience, and the accumulated wisdom of their years.

Diligence and faithfulness in one's daily work is one mark of the good steward; for a good steward is always mindful of the old adage which says: Do not waste time; for that is the stuff life is made of." He recognizes that time is one thing which once lost can never be reclaimed; it is gone forever. The good steward recognizes time as the period of his probation; he knows that the way he uses his time demonstrates his ability or inability to use eternity. He recognizes an obligation to God, to himself, to his family, and to society -- an obligation to be diligent in productive industry. "Thou shalt not idle away thy time; neither shalt thou bury thy talent that it may not be known."

Idleness is itself one of the major sins. When God gave man dominion over the earth, there was also a command and an implied obligation to dress and tend and develop the many assets of earth's garden so that they would be ample to provide for all the needs of men. Yet the sinfulness of being idle is not the worst fault which may be found with it. The sin of idleness encourages and fosters and promotes other sins -- without number. The devil always finds work for idle hands to do.

The idle man is always in danger of losing his love and concern for the welfare of others. He cannot very well love his brethren, because as long as he re-

mains idle he is callous and unheeding to their needs which only his labor can help to supply. Idleness encourages men to pride; for they must excuse themselves in their idleness by assuming that they are different and in some way better from other men who have to work. Then, too, the idle man usually is tempted to be selfish. He needs everything he has to support him in his idleness; therefore he fears to share with those in need. He is even too selfish to share his strength with others in the necessary labors of home, church, community, and nation.

Very often the idle man is unclean. When a man gets really lazy he doesn't wash, or comb his hair, or change his clothes, or shave, or do anything to keep his home and his premises tidy. Laziness breeds filth. Idleness also encourages self-indulgence, and leads to all the sins of the flesh, such as gluttony, drunkenness, and adultery. The body which is sinfully idle, with no desire for profitable work, encourages an attitude of fault-finding. To justify one's own idleness and to point the burden of guilt in another direction, it comes natural for the lazy, idle man to find fault with everything and everybody about him. Furthermore, the idle man or woman soon finds that one very interesting way of passing the time is in talking about his neighbors -- in gossiping, scandal-mongering, and gadding about as a busybody. The idle man is frequently a garrulous man who wastes his time in endlessly talking about things he knows nothing about-- in multiplying "idle" or unprofitable or careless words -- in useless conversation which has no point, no purpose, no meaning.

The idle man is quite apt to be one who spends the hours of night in looking for something to amuse him or to pass away the time, so that he gets to bed in the early -- or perhaps the late hours of morning, and who then sleeps half the day. This is a vicious, habit-forming pattern. There is a difference between rest and loafing. Rest properly follows labor. The laborer finds his rest sweet and satisfying. After his strength and mental vigor have been restored by sleep taken in the proper hours, he is ready and eager to return to his labor. But it is characteristic of the loafer that the more he loafs, the more tired and bored he becomes; the longer time he spends in bed when he should be working, the less eager he is to work. Sleep in the hours designed by God for sleep invigorates both

body and mind. Too much sleep, or sleep which is not preceded by profitable and tiring labor, only debilitates and makes one more lazy than before.

Idleness encourages evil thoughts. When one has nothing to do, nothing to think through, no problems to solve, nothing to do but sit -- that is the time when the day-dream or the reverie turns to evil or mischievous things. It is possible, of course, to spend our leisure in positive and profitable thinking; but too often idleness brings only idle thoughts. "Cast away your idle thoughts."

The desire for a life of idle ease encourages avarice, greed, envy, covetousness, and extortion. No one can live in this world unless he or someone else works to supply his needs. If any man will not work to supply his own needs, he must depend on someone else. The lazy idler is nearly always jealous of the wealth of the more diligent laborer, and frequently spends his idle time in devising methods of getting that wealth by theft, fraud, deceit, cunning, or extortion. Idleness can be the beginning of many a crime involving property.

The question of idleness enters into the whole question of wholesome recreation. God does not expect us to spend every waking moment in hard labor. Each one of us needs some time for worship, for rest, for relaxation, for recreation, for enjoyment. The trouble with many of our recreations and amusements today is that they do not re-create. They only waste time. They do not improve body, mind, or spirit. They do not refresh us so that we can do a better job of work next day. Proper recreation is a means to more and better work. Improper recreation is simply wasteful, wicked idleness.

There is one more aspect of idleness which should be mentioned. Idleness sets a bad example for youth, who from their idle elders get the idea that the world owes them a living as very special people -- that all the good things in life are free -- and that other people were created to work for their pleasure. Much of our juvenile delinquency comes from young people who have never been taught the duty, the obligation, or the joy of labor.

Cease to be idle, for idleness breeds most of the sins that separate us from each other, from our Father in heaven, and from his kingdom.