

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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World Headquarters: The Auditorium Independence, Missouri

Program Number 236
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The Sermon: THE DANGERS OF MONARCHY

Scripture: Book of Mormon, Mosiah 13: selected verses from 17 to 32.

If it were possible that ye could have just men to be your kings, who would establish the laws of God and judge the people according to his commandments, ... then it would be expedient that ye should always have kings to rule over you And now I say unto you, because all men are not just, it is not expedient that ye should have a king or kings to rule over you. For behold, how much iniquity doth one wicked king cause to be committed! yea, and what great destruction. Ye can not dethrone an iniquitous king, save it be through much contention, and the shedding of much blood. For behold, he has his friends in iniquity, and he keepeth his guards about him; and he tearth up the laws of those who have reigned in righteousness before him; and he trampleth under his feet the commandments of God; And he enacteth laws and sendeth them forth among his people; yea, laws after the manner of his own wickedness; and whosoever doth not obey his laws, he causeth to be destroyed; And whosoever doth rebel against him, he will send his armies against them to war, and if he can, he will destroy them; And thus an unrighteous king doth pervert the ways of all righteousness.

Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another; therefore I say unto you, It is not expedient that ye should have a king.

In the United States of America it is almost a basic axiom that church and state should be separate. The wise men who wrote the Constitution had had some experience with unholy and unwise combinations of church and state, and had learned that in such combinations both church and state often tend to corrupt each other. They therefore wrote into the Constitution a prohibition of any established or state-supported religion.

From this fact some people conclude that there should likewise be no connection between politics and religion, and that Christian people should never meddle with government. There is no area of human life which more clearly belongs to religion than the area of human conduct, morality, and the right relationships of man to man. With all these things the state and its laws also have to do. The church and its members, as citizens of the state, therefore have not only the right but the responsibility to be deeply concerned about the principles, the processes, and the officers of government.

In the light of religious truth and religious standards, then, let us ask what are the dangers of monarchy, or of any form of dictatorship or absolute rule?

The Book of Mormon has not only a considerable amount of teaching on this subject, but a number of object lessons taken from the history of ancient America.

In a previous sermon of this series we discussed God's concern for the freedom of men -- a concern which prompted him to send his Son that men might be redeemed from death, and have the right and opportunity to choose eternal life rather than eternal death. In another previous sermon, we said that God denies none that come unto him; that all men are equal in his sight, and have equal claim on his mercy and bounty.

The first danger of a monarchy is that it is too often a threat to human equality and human rights. There have been great and noble and righteous kings, but far too often the history of kings is a history of denial of human rights and liberties, a history of tyranny, of greed, of selfishness, slavery, reckless spending of public monies, of high taxes, and other exorbitant and unreasonable demands that grind the faces of the poor and enrich the king at the cost of impoverishing his kingdom. As we have seen, God wants every land to be a land of liberty, where every man may enjoy his equal

rights and privileges and liberties alike.

As a corollary of the first reason for calling monarchy dangerous, is the fact that the hereditary monarch, unless restrained by democratic or religious principles, plus constitutional law, can bring a whole nation down in wickedness. The Book of Mormon says: "The sins of many people are caused by their kings." A wicked king can favor and support and encourage wicked companions. He can bribe and corrupt those who should be the guardians of peace, law, justice, and morality -- that is, the police, the judiciary, and the army -- and with the protection of these can "tear up the laws of those who have reigned in righteousness before him," and enact new laws to support his own wickedness. The Book of Mormon gives the example of a wicked king named Noah, who perverted all the ways of good government, religion, and righteousness, and wasted the resources of his realm in riotous living, gluttony, and whoredoms.

The Book of Mormon points out a third reason to beware of the absolute monarch. A wicked king or dictator cannot be deposed without great cost, with much contention, and the shedding of much blood, to say nothing of the cost in money and national resources and treasure. It is better to beware of the danger early, than to wish you had been more careful when it is too late.

A fourth reason why the absolute monarch is dangerous, is that such a system is frequently the cause of civil war, strife, bloodshed, and commotion. Conflicting claims for the throne often bring contenders who revolt and foment civil wars. Envy, greed, and inordinate ambition cause men to plot, scheme, assassinate, and rebel, keeping the nation in constant unrest and turmoil. Again the Book of Mormon offers an example from history when the people of Jared chose one of Jared's sons to be king over them. Jared warned them, "Surely this thing leadeth into captivity." All went well for two generations, but then came rebellion, war, contention for the throne, captivity for many of the people, and eventually division of the kingdom.

The fifth danger of monarchy is that it engenders social and class distinctions, jealousies, animosities, envyings, rivalries, and strifes among the people themselves. People who count themselves of high birth demand the right to rule over

those they consider of low birth, in defiance of God's decree that one being is as precious in his sight as another, and that one flesh should not be esteemed above another.

A sixth disadvantage to monarchy is the danger to the king himself. Lord Acton once said, "Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely." If a king is accountable to no one, if no one can question or hinder him, he begins to think of himself as a god, a perfect being who can do no wrong, whose acts are right because they are his. He becomes like a king who when appeal was made to the law, replied, "I am the law." Because the risk is so great, the Book of Mormon says, "trust no man to be king over you."

A seventh and very important reason for avoiding monarchy or absolutism in government is that such a system prevents the sharing of responsibility for government. All the burden of government should not be placed on the shoulders of one man. All citizens should share equally in the burden of making decisions, policies, and laws. Then it is requisite with God's justice to hold each man accountable for his care or neglect in establishing and maintaining good government; and every man is accountable for his own sins, both individual and collective. When all the people choose evil through democratic processes, then it is time for God to judge the nation.

The eighth reason to condemn monarchy is that it denies the supremacy of God as King of the whole earth. Those whose first and total allegiance is to God can in good conscience recognize the authority of those men who are chosen by common consent and democratic principles to represent them in the affairs of free government, but they cannot recognize the right of any man to exercise absolute power over them. Such power belongs only to God, and secular rulers who are also subject to his sovereign power rule only by the sufferance of God and the people.

A just and righteous king has certain advantages. As absolute monarch he can make laws and enforce them much more quickly than the people of a democracy. But all men are human, fallible, subject to temptations and pressures: and the dangers and disadvantages of absolute rulers far outweigh their seeming advantages. Therefore, as God has said to the people of ancient America, "It is not expedient that ye should have a king."