

"WALKMAN RELIGION"

TEXT: "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that
her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is
pardoned, and that she has received from the Lord's
hand double for all her sins."
(Isaiah 40: 1, 2)

INTRODUCTION During July of this year a story broke out of Philadelphia that carried the sad word that a young man in his mid-teens had been struck dead by a train. The victim had been walking the tracks out in one of the city's suburbs. The police reported that they found ear-phones and the scattered remains of a portable radio near the scene of the tragedy. It is not hard to conclude that the man who was killed was tuned in to his own private world of music and thus failed to hear the warning roar of the diesel bearing down upon him.

One has to concede that Walkman type receivers produce a fantastic sound that truly borders on the spectacular. We've had one or two of them around our apartment for over a year, but it wasn't until this past August that I had full opportunity to really discover for myself what a remarkable sound is produced.

One of the memories I have of Summer days spent in Maine centers around a Walkman that was loaned to me by a delightful ten year old girl living in the cottage next door. Suzanne Witmer insisted that I borrow her Walkman along with several cassettes belonging to her father. And since Suzanne had a second Walkman with her at the beach and since her father insisted I enjoy some of his cassette recordings, I accepted their gracious offer and with the Walkman at my waist and the ear-phones tightly pressed against my ears, I tuned in on a number of Bach organ preludes. I suddenly found myself in a world of my own and the sounds of the rest of the world seemed far away.

DEVELOPMENT And therein lies the seed for a meditation for this first Sunday of Advent. The Walkman phenomenon centers in two accomplishments that are simultaneously achieved. Tuning in and tuning out. With such a radio or cassette one can render his or her favorite world portable and at the same time shut out the sounds and claims of his or her not so favorite world. In fact, the shutting in and the shutting out is so complete that some states are contemplating legislation that would prevent the use of Walkman sets by motorists and cyclists.

Let me develop this in terms of what brings us together here today. Walkman type of religion has been with us for a long time. One thinks of many who he has met over the years who are finetuned to the songs of Zion, but who cannot hear the pain and the anguish of the world around them. Some of our 24-hour "religious" radio stations apparently attract listeners who tune in for hours at a time. Escapism - pure and simple. Imagine traveling through life in a portable cocoon of wanted sound.

Walkman type of religion tends to be selective and exclusive rather than open and inclusive. Some there are who want to hear certain sounds when they come to the House of the Lord. They don't wanted to be disturbed by some of

the Gospel sounds. Play my favorite tunes and I'll support you. Tone down the warning roar of those sensitive and critical issues bearing down upon humanity today. Walkman religion. Selective and exclusive in a way. Let it not be named among us. Tuning in. And tuning out.

BIBLICAL RELIGION On the other hand, Biblical religion calls us to listen to two worlds--the world of eternity and the world of time. And either without the other is a distortion that earns the scorn it reaps.

Biblical religion listens to the sounds from both worlds. Biblical religion provides us with a view of the world that is broad and inclusive of all of God's children, a perspective that is open to the pain, the suffering and the anguish of others. Biblical religion takes us back to those great prophets of Israel and we listen to the voices of men like Isaiah who gave us the lifting words of our text. Hear them again:

"Comfort, comfort my people. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries: in the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

The world of eternity and the world of time. We are called to listen to the sounds of two world.

A tailor was fortunate enough to get an audience with the Pope and upon his return from Rome, his friends and colleagues all gathered 'round him and asked, "What's he like? What's he like?" And the tailor responded saying, "He's a 42 regular!" So much for limited perspective, for the narrow view that sees only the "42 - regulars" of the world and fails to see and to hear the cries of many "not-so-regulars" - those who are different from ourselves, the hungry, the hurting, the have-nots of our world.

Mother Teresa's pattern points the way. Her days in Calcutta begin with a celebration of the Eucharist before sun-up. There she gets in touch with untiring love and with boundless grace. Her day continues when she leaves the upper room and gives herself to those who need to know that they matter to God because they matter to her. Could you imagine this saintly Christian woman ambling up and down the streets of her chosen city with a Walkman radio at her waist and ear-phones tightly pressed against her ears listening to Bach's "B Minor Mass"?

ADVENT SEASON And so we come to Advent, the Season when we prepare ourselves so that we may hear and receive the music from the other world in order to better listen to the sounds of the world in which we live.

This is the time when we remember the light that came into the darkness of our world in Jesus Christ. The Christian, Paul said, is a person who pays more attention to the light that has come than he does to the darkness.

I understand that the Anglican Church in Leicestershire in England is a beautiful, magnificent Gothic Church. There's an interesting story behind it. When Cromwell came to power in England it was a chaotic time. The militant Puritan came down with a vengeance upon all those people who worshipped in the old way. He destroyed the Church; he smashed the stained glass windows; he demolished the altars and prohibited anybody from worshipping in the old way. In the midst of this a man name Sir Robert Shirley built a church in Leicestershire on the old Gothic pattern. Cromwell called Shirley to London, threw him in the tower and there he died. If you visit that Church today you will see that there is an inscription over the front door that reads like this:

"In the year 1653 when all things sacred throughout the nation were either demolished or profaned, Sir Robert Shirley, Baronet, founded this Church whose singular praise it is to have done the best thing in the worst time and hoped them in the most calamitous."

"To have done the best thing in the worst time and hoped them in the most calamitous". The light came and continues to come so that we will always do the best things in the worst time and hope them in the most calamitous.

LET US PRAY We ask, Lord, for ourselves the most meaningful Advent Season
we have ever known.

Give us keener self-understanding - as keen as we can bear at one sitting - lest we think of ourselves more highly, or lowly, than we ought. Give us a sense of what is vital in life - lest we squander our years and waste our attention on inflated trifles. Give us a due regard for our unity with all your children, lest we think in tribal patterns and forget that Thou art Lord of all the earth.

Drive us to our knees; to the Book; to an awareness of our sin; to a careful searching of our virtues; to a serious examination of words and terms so glibly sung and spoken. Measure us, O God, according to Thy judgements, but take not Thy mercy from us.

And grant that when Christmas morning breaks for us this year, we may have something more to show for our much running about than tired feet, wrapped presents and regrets for cards not sent.

When Thou said, "Seek ye my face", my heart said unto Thee, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek". Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Church Christ. Carol

Sunday Dec 11, ^{5:00 pm}
meet at Church

parsonage cookies - Hot Choco after

Annette Lewis

Elizabeth Haskey
Substitute for Anette

12/4/88