



AT EASE IN ZION

‘Woe to them at Ease in Zion!’ proclaims the prophet Amos, and so might he proclaim it of today’s church also! We tend to be lazy, for the most part unwilling to get involved much in the issues, both social and spiritual that inflict our land and the world around us. We are far too comfortable, it would seem!

This sketch is mostly mimed, only James actually speaking at the end, the other voices having been taped beforehand, along with the music.

CAST: James, Wife, Voices (Off), Beggar, Jack , Bill

Enter James, wearing business suit, tie etc. briefcase. Sighs happily. He is home after a busy day. Enter wife who kisses his cheek, helps him off with his jacket and exits. James takes off his tie, drops it on the floor and undoes the top button of his shirt. Sits down on comfortable chair, yawning. Switches on the radio. The music is the Hamlet cigar theme (Air from Suite No 3 – for the G-string - Bach) which has become synonymous with relaxation. He closes his eyes and stretches out his hand, at which point wife enters and puts cup of tea in it and exits picking up tie. He drinks, while wife re-enters with slippers, removes his shoes and puts his slippers on. She exits. James asleep, music fades, he dreams:-

Voice: Do not love sleep or you will grow poor. Stay awake!

Voice of James: Just a little sleep?

Voice: How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?

Voice of James: A little sleep. A little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest (enter beggar with bowl, who entertains James in mime).

Voice: If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love in words or tongue, but with actions and in truth.

Voice of James: But I gave £5 to my daughter for a sponsored silence the other day, that was to help some Third World charity, I think. And it was more than the other parents gave!

Voice: So you gave to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets as the hypocrites do in the synagogues, and on the streets, to be honoured by men. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret.

Voice of James: But He gives His beloved sleep! (He is uncomfortable, and stirs).

Voice: For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat (exit beggar). I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger and you did not invite me in. I needed clothes and you did not clothe me (enter Jack in a wheelchair) I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.

Voice of Jack: Hello James remember me? I used to live next door. No, I suppose you'd rather forget me, wouldn't you? We used to be friends until I got sick. When my illness first started you were kindness itself, until it was confirmed that I had HIV. Suddenly you had other things to do, other friends to see, I'm in hospital now, James, I can't get out, and I'm on oxygen most of the time. Still jogging, James?

Voice of James: I think Jack would rather I didn't visit. After all, he must be embarrassed. Guilty feelings, I expect. The wages of sin and all that. I have to think of my family as well. I mean, you never know, do you? Besides, I believe they get tired easily (exit Jack).

Voice: They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or in need of clothes, or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' He will reply 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you not do for me'.

Enter Bill. He is in anguish, and mimes trying to get out of a small, dark cell.

Voice of James: Hey, that's Bill from work – 'Hello, Bill, how are you doing? Just a minute, what are you doing in...

Voice: In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham, with James by his side, so he called him. 'Father Abraham, have pity on me, and send James to dip the tip of his fingers in water, and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire'. Abraham replied, 'Between us and you, a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, not can anyone cross over from there to us'.

Voice of James: But Bill, I told you all about our new church. I thought that maybe you'd pop along to see how comfy it was! You didn't come!

Voice: The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now, than when we first believed. The night is nearly over, the day is almost here.

James wakes up with a start – sits on the edge of the chair and shudders.

James: Phew, what an awful dream! Anyone would think it was my entire fault! Third World poverty! Jack! Bill! Anyway, I thought the Holy Spirit was supposed to be a comforter! I don't feel very comfortable!

Voice: Be on your guard! (James is afraid) Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. Whether in the evening or at midnight or when the cock crows, or at dawn. If He comes, suddenly, do not let Him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone – WATCH.

James:

But I want to be comfortable! (puts thumb in mouth and goes back to sleep. Enter beggar, and Bill pushing Jack in wheelchair. They reach out in entreaty to James. Freeze).