

'Scarborough Country' for April 11

Read the transcript to the Tuesday show

Guests: Eugene Brown, Lisa Bloom, Yale Galanter, Michael McDermott, Fred Phelps, John Gleason, Katie Youmans, Dana White, Mike Swick, Michael Kopko, Kenneth Hoagland

MICHAEL SMERCONISH, GUEST HOST: Stay where you are everyone. We've got a big show tonight in SCARBOROUGH COUNTRY.

In a moment, I'm going to talk with a pastor. This guy is leading protests at military funerals. But, listen, it's got nothing to do with being against the war.

Coming up next, the battle over protesting military funerals. Should scenes like this be allowed? We're going to debate it with the pastor who organizes these protests.

SMERCONISH: It's supposed to be a final farewell for America's bravest. But military funerals are becoming the latest battle ground for the First Amendment, believe it or not. Protesters, unhappy about the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy have been protesting at military funerals. Now lawmakers want to stop scenes like this. Congress is looking at legislation banning protests at national cemeteries. And 27 states are looking at some kind of legislation to keep protesters away from funerals.

Joining me now, the organizer of the protests. He's Pastor Fred Phelps of the Westboro Baptist Church. Welcome to SCARBOROUGH COUNTRY.

FRED PHELPS, PASTOR, WESTBORO BAPTIST CHURCH: Thank you.

SMERCONISH: I want to show you, Pastor, and show the country some of the signs that have popped up at funerals where you protested. "Thank God for 9/11." "Thank God for I.E.D.'s," improvised explosive devices. "Thank God for maimed soldiers." "Thank God for dead soldiers." Consider yourself a good American?

PHELPS: Yes. And that's good Bible preaching. And I'm a Bible preacher. This nation is under the wrath of God almighty, and this nation needs to be told that.

SMERCONISH: And you think that part of...

PHELPS: That's the message and that's the only important—

SMERCONISH: You think a part of being a good American is to have signs like those that we've just shown?

PHELPS: I'm telling you that that's the only righteous message for this evil nation that has gone the way of the Brokeback Mountain. God's wrath is upon this nation. And he's pouring

out that wrath by killing these soldiers and maiming these soldiers in Iraq and sending them back in body bags. And it's only going to get worse.

SMERCONISH: Pastor Phelps...

PHELPS: The metaphoric language of the Scriptures is that smoke is coming out of the nostrils of God...

SMERCONISH: Pastor Phelps...

PHLEPS: ... and fire is coming out of his mouth.

SMERCONISH: I think it's already...

PHELPS: And that means that God is cursing this nation.

SMERCONISH: I hear you. Listen...

PHELPS: ... And this nation must be told that. And anybody that has just a little teeny-weeny knowledge of the Bible knows that that's the truth.

SMERCONISH: Listen, I...

PHELPS: And this nation is only be going from bad to worse under the wrath of God almighty.

SMERCONISH: I think that folks already recognize exactly...

PHELPS: Now all these efforts to stop us you understand...

SMERCONISH: Now, hold on. Just hold on for a second and let me get a word in.

PHELPS: ... are a clear violation of the First Amendment.

SMERCONISH: Pastor Phelps, I think folks already know...

PHELPS: I said all these efforts to stop us are a blatant...

SMERCONISH: ... exactly what—You're just going to have to let me talk, sir.

PHELPS: ... a blatant violation of the First Amendment.

SMERCONISH: I think people already know what I'm dealing with here in SCARBOROUGH COUNTRY with Pastor Phelps. But just in case, I want to show everybody what the Web site of this fellow says about September 11. You're not going to believe this.

“Thank God for September 11th. Thank God for those planes. God ordained and decreed these acts. He determined in eternity to hurl those airplanes, like fiery darts out of the sky. He used the evil followers of Osama bin Laden to punish even more evil people.”

You can defend that, sir. You’re going to put us on the same plane as Osama bin Laden...

PHELPS: Defend it?

SMERCONISH: ... and it’s all about gays in America?

PHELPS: Defend it? I’m proud of it. And that’s the only thing that can be classified as gospel preaching. And the trouble with the nation right now is there’s a national movement to blot out the First Amendment—a national movement to criminalize gospel preaching...

SMERCONISH: Your argument is that September...

PHELPS: ... And that’s what you ought to be worried about, and not the gospel preaching itself.

SMERCONISH: Your argument is that September 11 occurred, so that God...

PHELPS: Absolutely.

SMERCONISH: ... could seek retribution against the United States, because we’ve become supportive of gay rights?

PHELPS: Absolutely.

SMERCONISH: If an individual should...

PHELPS: And it’s those—and it’s not far...

SMERCONISH: If an—Wait a minute. I’ve got a question for you. If an individual should die in urban American tonight...

PHELPS: No, all you want to do is all this talking. Now you’re going to have to shut up and let me do a little bit of the talking.

SMERCONISH: You’re not sounding like a man of God.

PHELPS: Of course it’s the wrath of God that’s poured out on this evil nation.

SMERCONISH: Is every murder...

PHELPS: And more is coming.

SMERCONISH: ... that’s committed in the United States today a result of the same policy?

PHELPS: It is a very serious crime against God almighty for this nation to say that it's OK to be gay. And that's the straits that we're falling upon, as it was in the dates of Lot...

SMERCONISH: Ooh, I'm having a Rod Serling moment here, sir.

PHELPS: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built...

SMERCONISH: Joining me now—All right, enough of you.

PHELPS: ... but the same day Lot went out of Sodom...

SMERCONICH: Hey, zip it.

PHELPS: ... it rained fire and brimstone from ...

SMERCONISH: Cut his microphone. I've heard enough of this guy with the fiery eyes. Enough of him.