

SALM + SAMO

A SERMON

preached in

SAINT PHILIP'S CHURCH

at

THE SPECIAL SERVICE OF TRIBUTE AND HONOR TO

FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

on the day of his burial

and

A RADIO ADDRESS

over

STATION WMCA

on

NEW WORLD A-COMING PROGRAM

on

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by

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SAINT PHILIP'S CHURCH

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"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." JOHN XV:13.

"He, being dead, yet speaketh." HEBREW XI:4.

THE mystery of life of which we spoke last Sunday has come into tragic focus this week. When it was almost impossible to comprehend so many of the elements and implications of our present situation, we are worse confounded by the loss of our Chief Executive. He bore the banner of leadership, not for us alone, but in an almost inconceivable way, for the whole world. It is an overwhelming thought that one man, by the sheer power of his personality, by the breadth and depth of his comprehension of world conditions and human problems, by a quality of greatness that is well nigh indescribable, should become in the short span of twelve years the symbol of the hopes of millions of men, of all races, religions, classes, and nations. It is of few men in the world's history that such a thing could be truly said. But of him it is a fact. In the lonely wastes of some far-off land, in the intimacy of some humble home, in the offices of the great and the assemblies of the people's representatives in many a land, there is one figure that has all unseen inspired and commanded, not with mystical reverence, so that his name was spoken in hushed tones and whispered cadence, but in the overtones of hard deliberation and social and political strategy.

It is to his credit that his word was not gospel. I say there was no ecstatic devotion paid that pointed the way to him as the world's deliverer. Much as his enemies tried to make it out differently, there was an essential grace and poise inherent in his character and his relationships that never showed the marks of either tyrant or Messiah. No matter what other rulers of the world claimed for themselves and their nation's destiny, Franklin Roosevelt showed no design for a world ruled by himself and his philosophy of political democracy. He was satisfied, it seems to me, to witness to the American ideal of integrity for all peoples under rulers who would guarantee to them and others peace and justice with opportunity for all. It is not possible that any man could always make known that ideal and convince all people of his sincerity or his unselfishness. Not even Jesus of Nazareth could do that. There is too much self-centeredness in all of us and too much determination to keep

our own nest feathered no matter what happens to the world of men that have no nests.

He spoke for people, for people everywhere. He spoke and lived for Americans first. Upon no one would he have had the strongest hold had he not done so. But he was concerned with people everywhere who were denied the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It was not he but America, the American people, who had to be concerned for Chinese coolies, for Norwegian fishermen, for Czech patriots and Greek partisans. Yes, and it was he who came to see the richness in the souls of the millions of Russian Kazaki that had struggled for a place in the sun even though they had come at it in a fashion different from the liberated American worker.

Franklin Roosevelt was rich, powerful, independent. A squire! That tells a tale. Part of a landed estate. Representing the entrenched interests of America and the world. Entrenched interests can hardly be other than evil, and yet so much apart from the intrigue and heedlessness of human welfare did he remain that no taint of that iniquitous world of money and power ever seems to have touched him. He forsook it. Remaining a squire, he became the leader of peasants. Having an independent wealth, he became identified not only with white and black children suffering as he had suffered in his own crippled body, but with disenfranchised and disinherited people everywhere. Being rich, yet he became poor. The dimes that one man hands out and the dimes that flow in the unique celebration of a President's birthday represent two worlds as different as heaven and hell on earth.

And yet that power he had was not discarded. It might have been, if that be really possible. But power tends to get used, for good or for evil. Under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, that power was turned into a power like that at Boulder Dam for which he was so largely responsible. Its virtually immeasurable power, diverted and directed to the use and welfare of thousands upon thousands of people whose lives are quite different because of it, has become a beneficence.

Sometimes power is not really comprehended until it is no more. A great man sits for an artist, raises his hand to his head, says "I have a terrific headache", and in less than three hours his actual power has ceased. This man that picked up a telephone receiver and spoke to England, to Italy, to China, to the South Pacific, to North Africa, and whose word was mighty. This man whose path in ten days would lead

him to San Francisco, to an epoch-making Conference that would likely change the course of history. This man that was great enough to be the real Commander-in-Chief of a fighting force of thirteen million men, in the air, on land, on sea, and under the sea, and who had not only the personal loyalty and allegiance of the vast majority of them, but also the kind of personal devotion that would make a sailor in Okinawa say, "I feel as though I had lost a member of my own family."

See the circle. A man with power greater perhaps in actual influence than any living man in a world more teeming with people than at any time in history, more complicated than we have ever known, who is so simple, so available, so warm in his natural affection for people that an unnamed sailor-boy can think of him only in terms of the intimacy of his own home, of a father, or a brother. That's pretty near to the ideal that Christ has made us feel could be among men. The Chief Executive of one of the greatest nations in the world tells stories and jokes to little children with paralyzed backs and legs in the relaxation of a warm Georgia sun, where human beings are just human beings, and power is only known in eyes, and tone of voice, and tenderness that reaches deep in the soul. The Commander-in-Chief rides a jeep in North Africa, not as a publicity stunt, but because he belongs to the unknown thousands that ride in jeeps and die in them. The great leader of the world who speaks through the air as almost never man in history has spoken to millions of people who sit tremulous and transfixed around this inimitable voice as he chats with his people, his vast family, turns, when he has finished, and asks like a little boy, "How did I do? Did I speak too fast? Was the voice all right?"

Power and childlikeness! Restraint mingled with an irrepressible determination to see the right done. Insignificance and greatness molded into one as the human is taken over into the Divine. When one rises from the ranks, as we say, from poor and insignificant background to a place of great unquestioned power and influence for humanity, that is America. That is what is particularly American genius. That is Abraham Lincoln. It was just 80 years ago yesterday, so strangely, that his life was snuffed out of a sudden. A great pall descended upon the nation then. His stature since has increased until out of the bowels of Illinois he has risen to be the great Humanitarian of the modern age. Franklin Roosevelt is something different, but no less great. The years ahead, we may be sure, will only confirm it. Of the millions and millions of words that will be spoken and written, heard and read, some will be vain and

empty, but none can take away from the greatness of this other humanitarian who may not be so called. He completes the circle. The mighty and the rich, born noble and well, has come down to company with, to work for, and to give his life truly for the poor and the enslaved and the hungry and the forgotten. Where Lincoln laid his glory dead, Roosevelt takes it up and makes it blossom until it come to bloom across the world. Lincoln saw a united America, not half-slave, half-free. His age hardly thought, hardly could think of a world of free peoples, though it would do injustice to that great immortal if we did not acknowledge such scope for his heart though he could not make it actual. Roosevelt found an America largely united and with several bold strokes in the fields of finance, industry and social relationships sought to overcome the misery and depression which had come upon us. The fact that he brought upon himself hatred such as only Lincoln in the same office had experienced demonstrated his consummate skill in cutting as a great surgeon into the very core of the impaired and diseased parts. Of course, the nation winced and recoiled as a body does under a surgeon's knife. But he was, as I shall always have to believe, concerned with the state of the nation and not with his social and political status. Already he began to see a free world—a world in which all people could work and eat and be free of domination—a world of international accord and security and peace. He died early, we may say in our ignorance of all of God's inscrutable purposes, because he had dedicated himself to peace in the world and to normal opportunity for all peoples in their social, economic and political relations. Out of a great world of free enterprise, and economic and social security in America, with great actual as well as potential power and assured independence, he spent himself utterly to bring at least within the realm of possibility and vision a similar security and independence, if not of quantity, surely of quality, (realist that he was), for all Americans and all nationals across the far-flung seas.

To-day he is dead. To-day a whole nation mourns, mourns deeply. A nation now used to mourning in high places and low, a nation that carries a sorrow deep in its heart for Russians dead in defense of Stalingrad; for Greek patriots dead of starvation in Athens; for Spanish revolutionaries dead in Madrid for freedom fascists took away; for bishops, priests and nuns dead in Germany as well as Norway; for Jews, millions of them, in Polish ghettos and in pogroms everywhere. A nation that has seen English cousins and French friends die on the same battlefield or by the same bombs that slew their husbands and their

brothers knows sorrow as never before. But this mourning to-day is along every highway, in many a secret place that will never be known; in schools and hospitals and homes; on ships and tanks and planes. On lonely islands and in busy marts, among men of low degree and those of high estate, tears are shed unabashed. The man in the highest office and with the highest honor and dignity America affords dies in an unpretentious American home surrounded by only a very few people helpless in the presence of the mystery of life and of death. And in a moment of time, as it were, the whole world knows that the great friend and leader of men, in whom they had pinned their personal hopes as well as the hopes of their nations, has been suddenly lifted out of their world never to speak to them again, never to speak for them again in the great assemblies of men and in the presence of his peers.

The first great shock is transformed before many hours have passed. People know that life must go on. A new President takes the oath of office. People in all walks of life are serious, sobered. Restraint is all about. Voices are hushed. Entertainment lags, is abandoned. This is more than a tribute of respect. This is the way people speak when there are no words that match the majesty of their heroic friend and leader now taken from them. There is sober thinking too—and wondering. People who had trusted that they had only to follow now have to find the way. That there was a way, that there is a way, that there always would be a way, they knew. Who would show it? What about sure peace? What about small nations? What about fifty million jobs? What about the forgotten of the world?

Let us be grateful to God that for twelve years and more America had the leadership of the greatest man America had to give. Let us not be vain enough to think that Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelts are plucked out of a nation any time for the wishing or the need. They come once in a generation or once in a century. It is said that in each Christian century God has raised up one saint that has towered so far above every secular leader, in holy life and thought, that history in that century has been changed, and society and history in part redeemed. Is there some great purpose of God manifested in the great leaders of all time who mold history? It is not to be expected that in any succession there can be men equally great.

It is to the great credit and honor of the American people that we accept a new leader and go on. This is as it should be. Our new President

has already manifested a humility that befits the time. He will need the strength and courage that comes from prayer and understanding on our part as well as his.

But we must be certain of one thing. The possibilities and the actualities of a new way we have seen. All that we have to say about the greatness of Franklin Delano Roosevelt will be so much eye-wash unless we are going to be true to what God has shown us for America and for the world through him. Jesus said, "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." *We cannot go back.* We have set our feet not toward but *in* the promised land of a new freedom and we must not give way to any reactionary forces that would enthrone wealth again or inordinate power; that would take away from Negroes such considerable advances as they have made. Roosevelt died because he would not give way. It took every ounce of energy, every moment of time, every devotion of mind and heart and body, to keep the level of achievement that he had set for all of us. His spirit is greater to-day—he is a greater American to-day—than he was this time last week. The things for which he declared are emblazoned now in the hearts and minds of those whose hopes and ideals for humanity he symbolized. We cannot relinquish them because his heart has ceased to beat, because his voice can no longer ring out. It will beat in us, his heart, and his words shall we speak. We shall speak them quietly at first to see if there are those who will hear; but loudly, and ever more loudly, through more and more throats, if there is the sound of different voices raised to say us nay.

We shall fall on bitter times. We should have fallen on bitter times anyway. We have known that. But with magnificent, uncompromising leadership we could go forward. Never wholly uncompromising, else it would not be really human. Only Jesus Christ never essentially compromised Himself or mankind. We knew that we would go forward with *him* and we were ready for the bitter days. Now we shall have the bitter days without him and we may only be able to stand our ground with the righteousness and justice and peace of God as our banners and the Cross of Jesus Christ for our unfailing hope. It is the spirit of Roosevelt surely that we shall stand our ground and require that we shall be led forward. It is the Kingdom of God on which we have our eyes. We have seen a little glimmer of it through the fires of war and its sacrifices. The insistent cry for permanent peace! The call to brotherhood, for work and food for all, for a united Church throughout the

world, for the erasure of racial prejudice and religious bigotry from all our hearts—this call has been heard and partly answered! This is our glimmer of hope. When the fires are out and the ashes cooled and blown away—if ever in our life-time they shall be blown away—we shall in no wise forsake our vision or our expectation that the vision we have seen is realizable.

The price we have to pay? Who knows? God grant we shall not have to pay it in blood; but spare us not the struggle, nor the pain, nor the show of courage or sacrifice that it will entail. This month is sacred to us, O God. It is the month when new life bursts forth out of the winter of darkness and death. It is the month of the Resurrection of our Lord Christ, when He, having suffered the torture of crucifixion, was raised triumphantly to a new life and a new power. We believe that He stands ready to give all strength and endurance and encouragement to those who are willing to suffer their crucifixion that a new world may be born. It is the month of Lincoln and Roosevelt, let us now say. We have a new inspiration now in our own day. One who has led us for twelve years nearer the hope we have in Thee toward a new order in our world is with Thee, and we pray that his fearless spirit may encourage us throughout our generation at least to strive as he strove, not counting the cost, but willing to give all, even our lives, to bring about the reign of peace and justice among all men everywhere, beginning in America. Amen.

RADIO ADDRESS OVER STATION WMCA

HE has led this nation—this Franklin Delano Roosevelt—for more than twelve tumultuous years. He has held the highest office and the highest honor America confers, its Chief Executive. He has molded thought and action by bold strokes of administrative genius. His voice, relayed to millions, has stopped a nation, well nigh a world, to listen to words so graciously assembled, in tones that touched the heart, and has driven men to loyalty and to hatred that themselves presaged his greatness.

To-day that voice is stilled. No longer can his smile and simple gesture warm the hearts of men and women everywhere. No longer will little children with twisted backs and limbs wait with eager hearts for his genial story and his cheering touch, except in unbroken recollection. But this was Roosevelt—the man, the friend, whom office did not dehumanize. He could be so mighty in the power of his convictions, and in the determination of his will—a will alert with vision beyond anything an American had yet the courage to see achieved. And yet he could be so relaxed, friendly, and unconventional even in moments of high achievement, that even the Queen of Holland recoiled a bit from his lack of pompousness and hauteur to which she was so accustomed in the rulers of countries overseas.

You talk about a New World a-Coming. It has come in Franklin Roosevelt. He will remain the symbol of a transition in history, when, against his will, he had to bring his beloved country to total mobilization for an ideal most Americans had learned to cherish. Was his heart on dominion, empire, the mastery of the seas? I cannot believe it. That would have been no new world. Of that preceding centuries have been full. Men's blood in untold floods has been spilled for that. For that he had no thought. It was for men and peace; for a world in which no more could hordes descend and enslave the world's millions. It was for freedom for men to walk and love and live—all men, of all races, classes, religions, and nations. He who was born in wealth and what we now think of as power forsook all their taint and found a place among the powerless, the poor. It was these, the struggling masses, with an added weight of approval carried here from brothers in Europe, Asia, and Africa, who kept him, against the cry of precedent, in the place of world leadership when they found not his peer to take his place. It was his friendly spirit, wafted alike over air-waves and in decisions and actions,

reaching to the very heart of humble homes, that brought into being a loyalty and an allegiance which only now can be estimated. When any man transcends every barrier that separates him from his fellow man in decisions that affect their total well-being, every barrier except that of class and political alignment, and in death annihilates even them, that leader commands world-wide acclaim and loyalty. Men of all nations who know the truth about themselves and their world, men and women of all races who desire a merited place in human relationships, have found a champion in Franklin Roosevelt. *That is a new world.*

And you who hear these words, you who would listen to such a program as this and all those with whom you have kinship, must not forget. When it seems no longer so fitting to sing his continuous praises, you will declare with your life if need be what you have seen in him. Vigorously, with no more hatred than his soul could abide, and uncompromisingly, in the Spirit of the Christ Whom he served and from Whom he drew power and inspiration, we must face out courageously into the new world he saw was coming and whose foundations he did so much to lay.

Let us bow our heads and hearts—

The God of peace, Who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant; Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight; through Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

