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**Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”**

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY.

TRINITY P. E. CHURCH,  
TAKOMA PARK, D. C.  
SUNDAY EVENING, MARCH 26, 1920.

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May I speak very informally, very briefly, not as a speech or as a sermon, and not very long, but just to tell you some of the things that I think come to all of us, especially in the critical times we have been through, and the critical times we are now facing.

I suppose these past two or three years have made people think more than they have in all the preceding twenty or thirty years. They have made us change our minds about a great many things; they have made us change our minds about what we owe to our country, and they have made a great many people change their minds about what we owe to the Church.

I remember a very interesting example of how people change, and I think it was in March -- about the 1st of March 1917. I happened to come into an office and there I found a member of the Cabinet and a United States Senator who happened to belong to another political faith, talking about the possibility of this war we were going to get into; and they were discussing about how an army was to be raised, and they were saying that if we had to raise an army of about a million men or some vast number like that, it was going to be by voluntary enlistment, and of course, it would be a great crime against our country and against our laws, if we were to resort to a draft or anything like that. And they agreed most heartily that any process like a draft that would reach all over the country, into every community, into every walk of life, that that would be, in some strange way, murder. I didn't say much, I could not say much, but I was heartily of the other opinion. And it is an interesting fact that about a month and a half later, one of those gentlemen was advocating the raising of this vast army through the method of the selective draft, and the other gentleman was voting for that measure most heartily up in Congress. Today, I think probably both, like most of us, are not only heartily glad that we had the draft, but recognize its fairness, and recognize something even bigger in the principle; the principle, in other words, that we could go in all communities, that we could call all people, rich and poor, to come forward when the nation needed them, and to bear their share in the way that would be most useful. It so happened that the young men from 21 to 31 were the most use-

ful to send overseas, but there is no reason why the same principle should not have applied to men over 30, over 40, over 50, apply to men and women, and even children, when the salvation of the country was at stake. And with that, the country got a very clear conception of those boys that went out and the others who stayed at home, and the men and the women who did their bit in the war, that they were doing it not only as a duty but as a privilege -- as a privilege of citizenship. And so we have come to realize more and more that even, of course, in time of war we have a chance to exercise that privilege. But these days, when the war is over, we are facing something else, we are facing, perhaps, the proposition of whether this privilege is something that we should exercise only in time of war. As a matter of fact, what is war? War is the history of a combination of disagreements, the conflict of various minds; a combination of all sorts of troubles with other nations, troubles many of them internal, that come to a focal point and burst in a cataclysm of arms, where people go out to try to kill each other. And yet after all, we have problems as we all well know, in times of peace. Many problems that are almost as vital to the future of our nation are going on at this moment; problems which, if decided wrongly are going to affect the future of our nation just as seriously, just as badly, as an unsuccessful war. We can have our defeats in this country in the piping times of peace, and we have had great defeats in this country during the past fifty years of our short existence. We have had defeat after defeat. Now, that sound very pessimistic, and I am not a pessimist.

We have heard our grand parents talk about the "good old times." We have heard sometimes, even our parents suggest that when they were young, that they didn't do the dreadful things that we do today, that the world was better when they were young, that we have fallen into bad habits, and that we should get back to some of the old principles, it would be much better for the world. Now, I don't believe that one bit. I don't believe that the good old days were half as good as these now days any more than I believe that those days that we are living in are going to be as good as the days that come after. I don't believe that there is any question but that this world as a whole, is a better world now than it was a hundred years or a thousand years ago. Certainly, if we believe in civilization, in civilization and the progress of man, you must agree with me -- you must admit -- that progress has gone on, sometimes rapidly, sometimes with little slips backward down the hill, but on the whole it has been going up, and it is continuing to go up, and one of the most splendid signs of that, is the fact that today in this country, there are more and more people that are taking an intelligent interest in how they can better the

service.

You know, up to a few years ago -- five or ten years ago -- there were only three uses practically for that word "service", and one of them was the use of the word in the navy. We have called it and we always call it, the "service". One of them was our brothers in the army; they called the army the "service"; and the third was in the Church, and it applied the word, "service" to this kind of a gathering when people came together to worship God. Up to ten years ago there was practically no other use of that word, and yet it is the finest word in the land, and today it is spreading. Today we hear in the Church, in public meetings everywhere, this talk of our "getting in and rendering service." It is being applied to hundreds of things and it is a word that will continue -- it is a simple word, a clear word, not one of those words that we get so sick of during the war, like the word "cooperate".

I remember when I was in London in the summer of '16. I was talking to Lloyd George at the time, and he told me that if I would go home and offer five hundred pounds for another word to take the place of "cooperate", he would pay the five hundred pounds. Well, nobody yet has invented a new word. The word "service" does not need a substitute.

But I was to talk about the opportunities for service. I cannot state all the opportunities for service because there are so many. There are opportunities every day; and if we get the habit of it, we can see opportunities on every corner. It is rather in the way in which we take the opportunities that the subject lies -- it is really in the manner in which we grasp the opportunity that we can help or hurt.

Two things, in my mind, affect the individual's usefulness when he or she takes up a new form of service. One is -- what shall I call it -- prejudice, ignorance. Yes, I think a combination of those two, perhaps not ignorance so much, as the inability to understand that there are two sides to a question. It is very much like in naval problems, in Church problems, the chances are that there are merits on both sides. I would not have it said of me, if I could help it, that I belong to the High Church Party or to the Low Church Party; I would rather have it said that I belong to the "Broad Church Party." And in the same way almost anything we take up, we find that if we only see one side of it, we will lose our usefulness. I know it is so in politics; I know hundreds of worthy citizens who will perhaps read only one newspaper in the morning, get their sole ideas of public questions from that newspaper, believe what it says implicitly, accept its editorials as gospel truth, and go about influencing other people along the line of what they have

read and not the line of what they have thought. I should like very much to see every person read eight or ten papers, and when they get the habit of reading eight or ten papers, you can do it in almost as short a time as you can read one. In other words, you can get all the angles of your subject and then make up your own mind as to what is right. And then the question comes down to how we actually deal with our fellowmen. You take it in my work in the Navy Department, your work in business, whatever you are doing, it is almost an invariable rule -- a rule that has few exceptions, that if you have one side of a subject in dispute, if you are trying very strongly to put through something and you find that there is opposition on the other side, or that other people hold divergent views, you can do one of two things, you can either talk about your side and get into an argument, almost always ending in a blockade, or you can get the other side of the dispute, get the other fellow by the arm and sit him down in front of the fire with you, or across the table from you, and talk it out. And I have no doubt that even though you may have stated your side of the question and know all your facts, even though you may be right, the chances are, that even though you may win in the end you will have learned something from talking to him.

And the other point is the question of being articulate. This country is an extraordinarily silent country. Time and time again we would let this thing go wrong and that thing go wrong and a whole lot of things go wrong, and either because we are a bashful nation -- I don't believe we are -- or from some other cause unknown, -- perhaps it is the glorious good nature of the American people -- we sit back and say nothing in the hope that some other fellow will come along and correct the abuse. I suppose that is a national characteristic which has been with us for a long time, which is rather amusing, which is rather easy-going, rather pleasant, but which costs this country in every way, in money, in progress, in good citizenship, in political cleanness, an almost inestimable amount every year. We let government go on, bad government, in hundreds of places all over the United States; we say, "O well, I suppose that is what we have got to expect." We let, in the Churches, bad business go on, I mean wastefulness. I mean the type of thing that you and I have seen all over the United States -- villages of 400 or 500 people with six churches. They cannot support six churches, and the members of those six churches try to follow closely all of them; being good christians, thinking along the same lines, and the result is, not those churches, probably all six are just about scraping along, underpaying their ministers, overheating their churches, and generally speaking, making no progress, and yet people allow that to go on, because it has always been that way. Those Churches have been there, why, the last one was built in 1840, and they could

not change, and anyway, there is nobody to start it going. People, there are lots of them, I have them in my office every day, people with new schemes, inventors, people who want to try something new. They are generally the most awful bores in the world, but honestly, they do more good than the people that may have higher thoughts and live the best lives, and never open their heads about it. We are not articulate and it is time for us to talk; it is time for us to express our opinions, to make them ourselves and not take them second hand. And after we have made them to go out and talk to our neighbor about what we think, and he may get something from us. And I am quite certain if we answer back, that we will get something from him. It is in that way and in that way only that progress in a nation is truly made. It is only in that way that our opportunities come. We can grasp them and make them work for us. It is only in that way that we can hand down a better nation, a straighter thinking nation, a cleaner living nation, to our children in the next generation. And may this Church and this congregation grasp their opportunities and go on from better things to better things in the years to come. Thank you.