

That is my wish, or my prayer today....that my tongue may do justice to this opportunity. I do appreciate the opportunity to share with you some of my experiences and impressions gained from living in and travelling throughout the countries of western Europe and the middle east.

Before commencing upon this particular theme, allow me to say a few words which will serve as an introduction to the main area of our thinking.

First of all I would just like to say a few words of a biographical nature. Last year I had the privilege of studying in Great Britain at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland as a Rotary International Foundation Fellow. In addition to the studies, I had opportunity to travel extensively throughout that side of the world. I was just doing a little recalling to mind yesterday as to what I was doing a year ago as now....Christmas day was spent in England and New Year's found us in the Netherlands. During the spring months I travelled to Palestine and saw the holy land in the full beauty of the Meditteranean spring. And during the summer months....I hitchiked around western Europe, rucksack on my back with another seminary student. We had a great adventure....absorbing the culture of western Europe, tasting infinite varieties of food ranging from Scottish hagsis to Turkish coffee. Three words help to describe the entire experience....fascinating, fatiguing, and fattening.

The second thing I might just mention is this.....today's message is not a sermon in the best sense of the word. Rather I would call it a sharing of experiences....evaluating and interpreting different aspects of last year's adventure within a loosely constructed sermonic framework. I shall be pointing out my own impressions of need in the lands I travelled in and emphasizing what I consider to

The message which I share with you today wasn't written in any one day or any one week. Rather it has been forming in my mind for close to a year. The impressions or conclusions I share with you today are somewhat general, but they are valid, having been impressed upon my mind wherever I have travelled throughout the old world. It is dangerous to generalize on the character, customs, and culture of foreign lands; one may try to pose as an authority and be guilty of misinterpretation. I do not profess to be any kind of an authority. I speak to you today from my own limited experiences acknowledging margin for error in interpretation.

II

The first experience I would like to tell you about occurred last April when I was travelling around the middle east. This particular area is one of the sore spots of our world. The situation in Israel and Jordan is one that is likely to explode any minute. The Sunday before Palm Sunday found us sitting on the Mount of Olives outside the city wall of Jerusalem. We were gazing upon a scene that was familiar to the eyes of Jesus. To our left was the Hosanna Road, the road Jesus had ridden along some nineteen centuries before when He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Off to our right stood a yellow brick lookout tower some seventy-five feet high. Standing on this tower was an Arab soldier in his characteristic red headdress, binoculars in his left hand and a tommy gun in his right hand. His eyes were focussed upon our every movement. As we sat there, worshipping together, we all felt our emotions lifted to a high level. It was a unique experience to sit there quietly, meditating upon the words of Jesus. Suddenly the silence was broken by a click of the camera. "What's the light reading?" whispered someone sitting nearby. Back came the reply, "There's not much light today!" Not much light today. These words broke into my thoughts and have remained with me ever since. There's not much light today!

One of the effects of my own thinking this past year resulting from all this travel, has been a gradual shading of optimism regarding the future into pessimism. We here in the western hemisphere tend to be more optimistic regarding the future. We haven't had our land destroyed by war.....we haven't known what it is to be hungry.....we haven't seen our loved ones taken from us and sent off to concentration camps....our faith has cost us nothing. The world is a much smaller place for me today than it was a year ago, and it also contains a little more evil than I thought it did.

Let me tell you more about my trip to the middle east. The thing that hit me the hardest throughout the entire trip to the middle east was the extreme poverty that we witnessed. Everywhere we went, from Haifa through to Nazareth, from Jerusalem to Damascus to Cairo, little children followed after us begging for money. They'd tag along behind you, pulling at your clothes, or they'd get in front of you thus blocking your way. These dark, curly haired youngsters would look up at you with pleading eyes and say, "Baakshesh, mister...Baakshesh". (Means money) Perhaps you'd drop a few coins in their outstretched hands, but what good are a few coins in such a sea of poverty.

One night we went for a walk along the banks of the Nile River. It was close to midnight. I almost stumbled over two little children asleep on the banks of the river. One looked to be about four and the other seven. They were fast asleep in each others' arms. I asked the Egyptian folk we were with why the little tots weren't home in bed? "Home", they replied, "Why I doubt whether they have any home, let alone any parents. They'll be up at sunrise running along the banks of the Nile River begging for money". As they said this, I remember now that my thoughts travelled across the waters to the USA....to my own little niece asleep in a warm bed, surrounded by the love and warmth of home and parents. Such things as I saw on this trip will haunt me the rest of my life.

The disease in this area of the world is disturbing. The crippled and blind children we saw would affect the heart strings of the most insensitive and calloused person. As we were driving through the streets of Damascus, a little boy came up to the car window. He was carrying a little girl in his arms. Pointing to her eyes, he said, "Blind...Blind." I later learned that oftentimes parents will maim their small children's bodies with the hope of catching the eyes of sympathetic tourists. Begging children are whipped unless they bring home a good handful of coins at the end of the day. We send missionaries to this part of the world to convert the people to the Christian faith. I often thought that doctors would provide a more realistic answer to the problems of these poverty and disease stricken areas.

During the Christmas holidays, I spent several days with a Dutch family in Maastricht, Netherlands. Together we visited the American Military Cemetery in Margraten not far from Maastricht. The son of Dr. Edwin P. Booth, a professor at Boston University, lies buried here along with 8,000 other American boys. Mr. and Mrs. Brans, the people we stayed with, have adopted the grave of Bray Booth, a paratrooper killed in April 1945. It is a moving sight to see all the white crosses against a green background....row after row of them....as far as the eye could see. One deeply feels the horror, the destruction of war. As Mr. Brans said, "Every time I go there I just want to cry".

Let me share with you a few brief impressions gained from a trip behind the Iron Curtain. Last June I flew from the bustling and beautiful rebuilt city of Hamburg to the old capital city of Berlin. I took the opportunity of peeking underneath the Iron Curtain to see for myself what the conditions were like in the east sector of Berlin. Passing along Stalin Allee, the main thoroughfare of east Berlin, we were impressed by the great amount of propaganda displayed. Red flags flew everywhere. Signs with words such as: "Friendship with the Soviet Union is desired." "Through this gate you pass to the imperialistic west." These are examples.

We noticed a drop in the standard of living; not as many automobiles were to be seen. I shall never forget the haggard, desperate and forlorn looks on the faces of the people in Berlin. A strange atmosphere hung over the city; one might say there appeared to be activity, but no life... and no hope. The people appeared to be living on a day to day basis. They seemed to wander aimlessly throughout the rubble and ruins of this once beautiful city. In some parts of the world there just isn't any light.....to hope seems unrealistic.

Pick up....speak up.

III

Can we still hope? Can we, living in the 20th C. with the great threat of destruction hanging over us, can we still allow ourselves to hope? Is there a light to guide us through the turbulence of this age?

Yes....I believe that there is a light for our time. The result of all this travelling which I have done this past year has convinced me that our Christian-Gospel is still the only practical and lasting solution to the ills which beset our age. Its relevance to life today is the message which I bring to you. Time and again the thought has come to me that it is only the way of love and brotherhood that shall eventually lead us from the tunnel of darkness into the dawn of a new light. Never before in the history of mankind has the need been so great for us to learn and to reaffirm the simple message that Jesus gave to us.

Our hope does not rest in amassing a great number of atom bombs. I do believe that we need to be awake to the dangers of communism. The threat is real; it is an ideology which does not have the respect for human personality which to the Christian is the most sacred thing in the world. We do need to be vigilant. But I would like to emphasize that the eventual peace of the world does not rest upon bombs and bayonets. It rests upon our acceptance of the message of brotherhood and love.

During the Christmas holidays my roommate in Edinburgh and I travelled to Germany. By chance we came in contact with Bishop

Wunderlich of the German Methodist Church. We were having a look around the Methodist Seminary in Frankfurt when we ran into him. Inviting us into his office, he said, "Shall we talk in German or in English?" And since his English was far better than the few German words we could speak, we chose English. We were thrilled to hear the testimony of this German Bishop. He stressed to us how we must preach the message of brotherhood and love. He pointed out to us how thirsty ~~the world~~ ^{his country} is for the Christian gospel. He related to us how crowded the Methodist Churches behind the Iron Curtain have been on the few occasions when he has been permitted to speak there. He mentioned to us how the Communists are not actively interfering with the Methodist Church and how they have been able to dedicate several new churches in the past fifteen months in eastern Germany. He suggested to us in the closing minutes of our talk together that we carry back the hopes and prayers of the German Methodists to their brothers in America.

It is a curious thing, but the two Americans most talked about in Great Britain this past year have been Senator McCarthy and Billy Graham. McCarthy has done more to damage transatlantic relations than any other individual since the time of George III in the days of the American Revolution. But this other man, Billy Graham....frankly the British people were quite sceptical when he arrived on the London scene last March to conduct a three months evangelistic campaign. Not only were they sceptical, but also many Americans studying in Great Britain were sceptical as to what his effect would be. ~~X KNXXXX KNXXIXX X KNXXXX~~
There was bitter resentment in many quarters over the entrance of Billy Graham into their religious life. But Graham went over with a large degree of success. The British came to love the man's simplicity, directness and they took to heart what he had to say. Britain's spiritual life is in precarious condition. According to figures from TIME magazine, only 5% of the total population can be listed as church going, compared to 59% in the US. The night I hear Graham in London, the Harringay arena was

filled to capacity, just like it was very night during his three months evangelistic campaign. He brought new hopes to countless thousands; he helped to feed the spiritually hungry people of Great Britain. He pointed to the light which is needed for our time. Hanging directly over the huge arena in London was a sign: "I am the way, the truth and the life." *Perhaps familiar with painting, Light of World, H. Hunt.*

[The picture which is on the cover of your Order of Worship today]
[is a copy of the painting, Light of the World, by Holman Hunt.] The original work is in St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Several weeks ago I was worshipping in St. Paul's and happened to notice the original work. I recall having seen a copy of this painting hanging on my father's study wall as a youngster. Naturally I was quite ^{INTERESTED} ~~ticked~~ to see the original.

Standing there in front of this painting, the thought came pounding into my heart more convincingly than ever before that the message of Jesus is the light of the world and the only solid hope for our time.

SLOW

We must try the way of Jesus. There are no other ways. All the unwise ways have been tried and they have failed. We must build a Christian society; we must learn to live together and together build a world that will endure. The Christian message is the only light for our time and the only hope for our civilization.

We stand at the cross-roads. We must tear down the old walls of haughty nationalism and snarling imperialism. We must replace them with the modern bridges of internationalism, built on the foundation stones of Christian love and brotherhood.

OUR FATHER - MAY THE WORLD NOT MOLD US TODAY - BUT MAY WE BE SO STRONG AS TO HELP MOLD THE WORLD.

Prayer: Grant unto us such a vision of Thy eternal truth, beauty and goodness, that in the light of it we may work to build Thy Kingdom of peace and righteousness, of love and brotherhood on earth.

Amen.

A LIGHT FOR OUR TIME

There are certain shades of difference between life in Great Britain and life in the United States. For instance, what we call a tomato, the Britisher would call a tomato; what we call a dessert, the Britisher calls a sweet. What we call molasses, they call treacle. The story is told of a small boy, in the basement of whose home was a huge barrel of treacle or molasses. Every day this little boy disappeared for a few moments and nobody knew where he had gone. This is what had happened....he had gone down into the basement, lifted the cover on the barrel, stuck his finger into the treacle, obtained a large amount on his finger and then stuck it into his mouth. This went on for days and days. Naturally the supply of treacle got lower and lower. Each time the little boy had to lean further and further over the barrel to get the treacle on to his finger. One day the inevitable happened....he tumbled into the barrel. Nobody knows how he got out, but out he did. There he stood in the middle of the basement floor with treacle in his hair, eyes, nose, streaming down his face and around his neck. Unlike many boys he did not call for help from his mother and father. Instead he uttered a small prayer; this was his prayer: "Dear God, help me that my tongue may do justice to this opportunity!"

I'd like to share with you an experience that took place just two years today when I had the privilege to be travelling in section of the middle east. This particular area is one of the sore spots of our world. The situation in Israel and Jordan is one that is likely to explode any minute....perhaps plunging the world into war. On Sunday, the 4th of April found us sitting on the Mount of Olives outside the city wall of Jerusalem. To our left was the Hosannan Road, the road Jesus had ridden along some nineteen centuries before when He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Off to our right stood a yellow brick lookout tower some xity feet high. Standing on this tower was an Arab soldier in red headredd, binoculars in left hand and a tommy gun in right hand. It was a unique experience to sit there quietly, meditating upon the words of Jesus. Suddently the eilence was broken by the click of a camera. "What's the light reading" whispered someone sitting nearby. Back came the reply, "There's not much light today." These words broke into my thoughts and have remained with me ever since. There's not much light in some parts of the world today

On another occasion I visited the American Military Cemetery in Margraten, Netherlands. There are 8,000 American boys buried in this cemetery. It is a moving sight to see all the white crosses against a green background....row after row of them.....as far as the eye can see. One deeply feels the destruction of war.

There isn't much light in some parts of the world. War is a terrible thing. ~~We must try the way of Jesus. We must be willing to work and to pray for His way. All the unwise ways have been tried and have failed.~~ We stand at the cross roads. We must ear down old walls of haughty nationalsim - i mperialsim. We must dedicate ourselves to in a spirit of prayer to the cherished dream of the old Scottish bard, Robbie Burns, who said, "That man to man the world oe'r shall someday brothers be."