

"CALLED FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS"

SERMON BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

HOUSE OF HOPE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

JUNE 17, 1973

my father - { Business - Political - Religious
Action - No Procrastination -
Teacher

MANY CENTURIES AGO, MORDECAI SENT A STRONGLY WORDED
MESSAGE TO HIS ADOPTED DAUGHTER, ESTHER. THE NOTE READ;
"THINK NOT THAT IN THE KING'S PALACE YOU WILL ESCAPE ANY
MORE THAN ALL THE OTHER JEWS; FOR IF YOU KEEP SILENCE AT
SUCH A TIME AS THIS, RELIEF AND DELIVERANCE WILL RISE FOR THE
JEWS FROM ANOTHER QUARTER, BUT YOU AND YOUR FATHER'S HOUSE
WILL PERISH. AND WHO KNOWS WHETHER YOU HAVE NOT COME TO THE
KINGDOM FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS?"

THE TIME WAS AT HAND -- DECISIVE ACTION WAS REQUIRED
IF AN ENTIRE PEOPLE WAS NOT TO BE DESTROYED.

or studies - chair
Hard act to follow -1-

YEARS LATER, THE APOSTLE, PAUL, SENT AN APPEAL BY
MESSENGER TO ANOTHER PERSECUTED MINORITY, FILLED WITH
DISSENSION AND DISCORD, AND WONDERING WHETHER THEIR RELIGION
WOULD NOT BE DESTROYED BY ANOTHER EMPIRE.

↳ TO THE CHRISTIANS AT CORINTH, PAUL WROTE: "WE ARE
AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST, GOD MAKING HIS APPEAL THROUGH YOU
. . . WORKING TOGETHER WITH HIM, THEN, WE ENTREAT YOU NOT
TO ACCEPT THE GRACE OF GOD IN VAIN. FOR HE SAYS, 'AT THE
ACCEPTABLE TIME I HAVE LISTENED TO YOU, AND HELPED YOU ON
THE DAY OF SALVATION.' . . . Now IS THE ACCEPTABLE TIME. . ."

THERE WAS ALSO A MESSAGE FOR THE CONGREGATION AT
EPHESUS, WHICH HAD THREATENED THE ENTIRE COMMERCIAL STRUCTURE
THERE BY ITS REFUSAL TO WORSHIP AT THE TEMPLE OF THE GODDESS
ARTEMIS. { THE WORDS TO THIS SMALL BAND OF CHRISTIANS WERE
EQUALLY BLUNT: "ONCE YOU WERE DARKNESS, BUT NOW YOU ARE
LIGHT IN THE LORD; WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT . . . LOOK
CAREFULLY THEN HOW YOU WALK, NOT AS UNWISE MEN BUT AS WISE,
MAKING THE MOST OF THE TIME, BECAUSE THE DAYS ARE EVIL."

{ IT WAS FROM THIS LAST LETTER THAT REINHOLD NIEBUHR,
A THEOLOGIAN WHO, LONG BEFORE HE DIED WAS ESTABLISHED AS ONE
OF AMERICA'S MAJOR POLITICAL PHILOSOPHERS, BORROWED THE
TITLE OF HIS BOOK, THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT AND THE CHILDREN OF
DARKNESS.

THERE IS A WELL-KNOWN PASSAGE IN THAT BOOK, WRITTEN
TWENTY-NINE YEARS AGO, WHICH SPEAKS TO THE PROBLEMS OF
DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA IN THE PRESENT TIME. THE PASSAGE READS:

"MAN'S CAPACITY FOR JUSTICE MAKES DEMOCRACY POSSIBLE; BUT
MAN'S INCLINATION TO INJUSTICE MAKES DEMOCRACY NECESSARY."

L I WISH TO LAY BEFORE YOU THE PROPOSITION THAT THE YEAR
1973 IS A DECISIVE TIME IN THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY
-- THAT WHETHER THE UNITED STATES SUCCEEDS OR FAILS IN THE
COMING DECADE DEPENDS UPON THE DECISIONS AND ACTIONS WE TAKE

NOW.

*Yes, with Paul, "Now is the
acceptable time"*

L AN OLD WELSH HYMN, FULL OF THE THUNDER AND DETERMINATION
OF SOLDIERS MARCHING INTO COMBAT, PUTS THE CASE WELL IN THE
VERSE THAT READS:

"WE ARE LIVING, WE ARE DWELLING
IN A GRAND AND AWFUL TIME,
IN AN AGE ON AGES TELLING,
TO BE LIVING IS SUBLIME."

THIS IS AN AGE THAT WILL TELL ON ALL FUTURE AGES L To
BE A PART OF THIS HISTORY PRESENTS BOTH UNPARALLELED

OPPORTUNITIES AND THE POTENTIAL FOR ~~A~~ FAILURE.

Coldwar - 25 years - costly arms race
L THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES HAVE STOCKPILED

ENOUGH MEGATONNAGE IN NUCLEAR WEAPONS POWER TO COMPLETELY
DESTROY EACH OTHER.

UNTIL NOW, "PEACE" HAS BEEN MAINTAINED PRIMARILY THROUGH
THE DELICATE BALANCE OF THE TERROR OF NUCLEAR DESTRUCTION.

L THAT TIME MAY RAPIDLY BE DRAWING TO A CLOSE BECAUSE OF
ITS INHERENT INSTABILITY.

Breshnev here

L ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS MUST GO FORWARD, AND WE
SHOULD BE DEVOTING OUR FULL ENERGIES TO ACHIEVING AGREEMENTS
WITH REASONABLE SAFEGUARDS, BOTH TO STABILIZE OFFENSIVE
WEAPON LEVELS AND TO BAN ALL TESTING OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS.

L THE CRY ACROSS OUR LAND TODAY IS CALL FOR PEACE -- A
PEACE THAT IS MORE THAN THE ABSENCE OF ~~war~~. AND A

PEACE THAT FOCUSES ON MEETING CRITICAL HUMAN NEEDS AT HOME

AND ABROAD.

Shalom Peace Harmony
Just - Absence

THIS CALL MUST BE ANSWERED WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY

IF THE UNITED STATES IS TO RESUME ITS LEADERSHIP IN THE

SEARCH FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, AND IF OUR CITIZENS ARE TO

COME TOGETHER AGAIN AS ONE PEOPLE.

*(one nation under God,
inseparable with
Liberty, Justice for all.)*

IT IS THIS SENSE OF A UNIFIED PURPOSE IN OUR NATION

FOR WHICH WE ARE REALLY STRIVING. THE HEBREW WORD, SHALOM,

DOES NOT DEFINE PEACE AS SIMPLY THE ABSENCE OF VIOLENCE.

SHALOM DEFINES A LIFE THAT IS WHOLE, WHERE MAN IS NO LONGER

DIVIDED IN HIS HEART AND WILL AGAINST HIMSELF; RATHER, HE

IS TOTALLY COMMITTED TO ACHIEVING A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE

AS JUDGED IN THE VISION OF GOD. *this sense of harmony* AND IT IS THIS PEACE -- THIS

UNITY, THIS LIFE OF DECENCY, RESPECT, *and compassion* KINDNESS, AND NOBILITY

-- THAT WE MUST ESTABLISH IN OUR SOCIETY,

~~IT IS ESSENTIAL~~ AS WE APPROACH THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY
OF AMERICA, ~~that we commit~~ *we must commit* OURSELVES TO A REBIRTH OF OUR

NATION: *Reconstruction; Rehabilitation and
Reconciliation*

-- A NEW NATION, REDEDICATED TO THE CAUSE OF INTERNATIONAL
PEACE AND THE CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF ITS OPPORTUNITIES AND
BENEFITS;

-- A TRULY UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, WHOSE PEOPLE ARE
ASSURED THE OPPORTUNITY FOR DECENT HOUSING, ~~A~~ QUALITY

EDUCATION, ACCESS TO ADEQUATE MEDICAL AND HOSPITAL CARE,
AND ~~FULL EMPLOYMENT~~ *the chance to do construction &
rebuilding work*

~~One Nation, Under God, indivisible
with liberty & justice for all~~

(Wolfe)

IT IS TO THIS SPECIFIC AGENDA OF NATIONAL PRIORITIES

THAT WE MUST DEVOTE OUR FULL ENERGIES IN THE DECADE OF THE

'70's -- AN AGENDA THAT SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED IN THE POLICIES,
revealed and

PROGRAMS, AND BUDGET EXPENDITURES OF OUR ~~FEDERAL~~ GOVERNMENT.

THE CREDIBILITY OF OUR GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO THE

ACHIEVEMENT OF THESE GOALS WILL ONLY BE ESTABLISHED THROUGH

ITS ACTIONS.

*In times of stress and uncertainty
we gain insight & strength by returning to basics -
our Heritage.*

OUR NATION WAS BORN WITH THE ADOPTION OF A DECLARATION

OF HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT

OF HAPPINESS. THE FUNCTION OF GOVERNMENT WAS TO BE THE

SECURING OF THESE RIGHTS. IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING FOR

THE COMMON DEFENSE, IT WAS ALSO TO PROMOTE THE GENERAL WELFARE.

*Preamble We the People of these United States
do establish & Ordain this Constitution to
assure domestic Tranquility, to establish Justice*

~~and to~~

To Provide for the Common Defense + to
Promote the General Welfare. - It is at its
say as well as what it doesn't say that is
so important - It speaks of Domestic Tranquility,
Justice, Common Defense, General Welfare

A QUALITY OF LIFE WAS THEREBY DEFINED AS THE OBJECTIVE

OF THE "GRAND EXPERIMENT IN DEMOCRACY" -- A LIFE OF VISION,

OF HOPE, OF JUSTICE, FREEDOM, AND OPPORTUNITY.

SOME POLITICAL ANALYSTS ARE CONTENDING THAT AFTER ALMOST

200 YEARS, AMERICA IS ON A DOWNHILL PATH. LIKE THE "CHILDREN
OF DARKNESS," OF WHOM PAUL SPOKE, WE ARE WANDERING, STUMBLING,

OR SIMPLY "PACKING IT UP" AND TAKING WHATEVER PLEASURE WE

CAN GET OUT OF LIFE.

ABOVE ALL, THEY SAY, WE ARE TENSE AND CONFUSED OVER
WHAT IS HAPPENING IN OUR COUNTRY, AND AS A CONSEQUENCE WE

ARE SIMPLY CHOOSING TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS "GRAND AND AWFUL

TIME" AND REMAIN SILENT.

And, to be sure, the
headlines reminding us of corruption,
arrogance of power, invasion of privacy, wiretapping,

Blessings of
liberty to
ourselves
and our
posterity

not
society
not law
order -
but law
& justice,
not power
but liberty

burglary, obstruction of justice, are
enough to destroy faith & trust in our
Political System - 1 -

THE ANNALS OF MEDICAL HISTORY MAY BE INSTRUCTIVE HERE.

The expanded use of drugs;
ARMY DOCTORS WERE AMAZED AT STORIES OF NEW MORTAL "DISEASE,"

by our young; the increasing
TOLD BY RETURNING AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR AFTER THE KOREAN

evidence of corruption in the
WAR. AGAIN AND AGAIN, IT WAS REPORTED, AN AMERICAN SOLDIER

market Place; - all of this tears
WOULD WITHDRAW FROM HIS FELLOW PRISONERS, LIE DOWN IN A

at the heart and soul of our
CORNER, AND BE DEAD THE NEXT MORNING. YET HIS PHYSICAL

political, social + economic
CONDITION HAD INDICATED AN ABILITY TO SURVIVE THE RIGORS OF

System - Yet, the same system
THE ATROCIOUS CONFINEMENT CONDITIONS. HE HAD SIMPLY GIVEN

has the means of its salvation
UP, WHILE HIS CELL-MATES HAD CONCENTRATED ON THEIR OWN

and repair - We cannot just accept it -
SURVIVAL. MORE RECENTLY, EXPERIMENTS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT A

or we shall fail - in fact die from
PRIMARY CAUSE OF THIS MAN'S DEATH WAS PROLONGED TENSION,

~~tension coupled with~~ indifference
COUPLED WITH SELF-ISOLATION -- EXACTLY THE KIND OF LIFE THAT

SO MANY OF US ARE LIVING TODAY.

I SUBMIT THAT WHEN WE STOP CARING ABOUT THE KIND OF
LIFE WE OUGHT TO LEAD, ABOUT THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE AROUND
US, AND ABOUT THE PROFOUND PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN
OUR NATION, WE DO, IN FACT, BEGIN TO "DIE."

THERE MUST BE A RESTORATION OF HOPE ^{trust} IN AMERICA IN THE
COMING DECADE: A STRONG AND STABLE ECONOMY; A POLITICAL
SYSTEM THAT CAN BE TRUSTED; AN END TO POVERTY IN THE MIDST OF
AFFLUENCE; A SOCIETY WHERE THE DIGNITY OF EVERY MAN, NO
MATTER WHAT HIS COLOR, ^{our race} IS RESPECTED. THIS CALLS FOR VISION
THAT SEES A HORIZON BEYOND THE HILLS OF PRUDENCE AND
SELF-INTEREST. AND IT WILL DEMAND HARD WORK AND A GENUINE
COMMITMENT FROM EACH ONE OF US.

-13-

WE MUST MAKE THE MOST OF THE TIME, FOR THE HOUR IS
LATE. GOD WILLING, THE PROMISE OF AMERICA WILL BECOME A
REALITY FOR ALL OUR PEOPLE, AND THE HOPE FOR A BETTER
~~QUALITY OF~~ LIFE IN A WORLD OF PEACE.

#

Sandburg



Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



www.mnhs.org