

ADAH

how to place the proper accent on our aspirations

This address, a delightful elaboration of a new theme drawn from the story of the First Point of the Star, may be used at any time throughout the year. Those who plan to use the complete series will find this address a fine introductory program.

The address may be used to honor a visiting dignitary, or it may be dedicated to a past presiding officer.

There's something very practical about people — the way that people really tend to the very human business of living, the cleaning of homes and the doing of work, whatever circumstances demand that it shall be. But there is also something very impractical about people, a certain way they have of getting beyond the business of human living.

Some would say that dreams and hopes and aspirations are really ways human beings have of indulging themselves but that after all is said and done, what really is important in the long run is a very practical kind of a thing. Some would say that dreams and hopes and aspirations accomplish next to nothing but a little of such delightful pastimes is not too bad as long as you don't do too much of it.

However, for me, the long search for the hidden meanings contained within the teachings of our Order has made me increasingly aware of an accent on aspiration which seems to be an underlying theme of our work. The more I think about the matter, the more inclined I am to think that aspiration is probably one of the most practical and productive aspects of human activity.

Adah: Aspiration for the Good of Humanity

For example, in the story of Adah, it would be pretty hard to imagine what the consequences of the story might have been had aspiration, itself, not played a major role in the situation. This story is an extremely skillful interweaving of aspiration functioning for the good of humanity and aspiration distorted and contorted until it wreaks havoc in the lives of many.

Jephthah was indeed a man of mighty aspiration. As the story begins, whose heart would not swell at the thought of a man downcast and derided by a whole people who had the courage to set aside his own bitterness and anguish and devote himself completely to the task of liberating those who had persecuted him so vigorously? Truly, Jephthah, the oppressed, had set out to prevent the oppression of his own oppressors!

Here indeed is a paradox typical of the kind of thing which people are at loss to explain. Imagine the chagrin of the people as they gradually became aware of the heart and courage which beat within the breast of the despised man whom they would not deign to admit to full standing in their society.

So far, the story appears to be an account of grandeur. Here is a man inspired to come to the aid of his community. Further, Jephthah reasoned to himself that there must be some way to extract additional good for his native land. While undertaking this task, Jephthah turned his need to develop an efficient fighting unity into a means to salvage those whom society had banished as being beyond the point of being suitable individuals to live within their bounds.

The hills and woodlands that surrounded Jephthah's native land were the retreats of the dregs of society, the thieves and thugs, the burglars and bandits. Here among the forests, they eked out an

existence owing allegiance to neither man nor God. Here in the ungoverned savagery of the forest primeval, might governed right and each bent his cunning and strength to satisfy his own desires.

At First Glance Jephthah's Aspirations Were Noble

At this point in the story, Jephthah had been acclaimed by the people, affirmed by the elders and sanctioned by God to assume the leadership in the effort to liberate the nation. Jephthah had ascended the pinnacle of aspiration and he looked to the surrounding hills, not with fear and trepidation, but with a high sense of exultation as he moved into the challenge of working God's Will among men.

It is strange that no one came forward to accompany Jephthah as he strode forth to make his way among the criminals and derelicts. As far as we know, Jephthah must have felt a certain immunity from harm as the development of his divinely sanctioned mission became the consuming force in his life.

He was successful, too. We can only imagine what a mighty personality was his. How Jephthah persuaded those scarcely human individuals to give up their dedication to satisfying their own self interests as their exclusive preoccupation with living is nothing short of amazing. How, then, he persuaded them to dedicate their life energies to serving the interests of the country which had censured them with banishment is another astounding chapter in the saga of this unusual individual.

Up to this point Jephthah is consumed with aspiration, an ennobling sense of intimate involvement with the forwarding of Divine Purpose. What then happened to turn the tale of heroic endeavor into one of the world's best known tragedies?

There is every reason to believe that Jephthah was in an extreme state of exhilaration. He was driven by the urgency of the moment and overwhelmed with a sense of foreboding should some disaster fall upon the design to avert the impending destruction of his nation. It is here, at this point, that Jephthah made the fateful turn, the turn that led him from the Glory of God and down to the glorification of self.

Jephthah at last had come to a point where the glory of defending his people became a personal worldly ambition. It was no longer a case of preserving his people for the Glory of God. It was a perversion of this purpose. Jephthah had come to view his mission as a means to self-glorification. Finally, Jephthah, unable to face even the possibility of being defeated decided to try to bargain with God.

Deterioration to Self-Centered Ambition

How did noble aspiration become self-centered ambition? What happened to the lofty motives and the dedication to divine purposes? Jephthah had lost his sense of direction. Half delirious with progress and power Jephthah changed his aspirations. No longer did he give to God his unconditional love. No longer did he see himself as a tool in the Almighty Hand. No longer did he content himself with implicit confidence and trust that God's Will would manifest itself in human affairs.

He was impatient. He took it upon himself to establish victory as the ultimate goal. No longer could he see that victory or defeat were manifestations of God's Will. The goal was not the implementing of the Grand Design here upon earth. Rather, Jephthah wished to change the course of human affairs so that the outcome of the venture would enhance his grandeur in the eyes of men.

The ennobling aspiration that had filled Jephthah with boundless courage, that had served as the means of salvaging a host of men from their meaningless, savage occupations, was replaced by a worldly ambition that was to drench his heart with anguish and rent his daughter's life asunder. Jephthah had worshipped the image of himself.

Sometimes We All Wish Things Were Other Than They Are

As long as Jephthah had aspired to being a servant of God, as long as he could see that his mission on earth was to carry out God's purposes as they were made known to him, the course of events in Jephthah's life made sense to him. Whatever the vicissitudes of human affairs, Jephthah had been, up to this time, abiding in his faith.

It is only human, as all of us know so well, to sometimes wish that things were other than they are. Sometimes, we do earnestly wish that our immediate wants and desires could be miraculously complied with. For a moment, we wish with a certain desperation that we might have our way. But, faith is the determiner of the direction which our aspiration takes. Faith brings us to our sense of involvement in working out the human destiny.

From this vantage point, the joys and sorrows, the fears and hopes, the dreads and anticipations assume their proper proportion in the perspective of the individual who sees the affairs of man through unconditional love of God.

The promising prologue to the story of Adah which may be called the Rise and Fall of Jephthah sets the mood of the story against a background of tragedy heavily overtone with a sense of foreboding, a sense of impending disaster.

It is with a sinking feeling that we read on — the tinkling of childish laughter, the prancing and dancing of childish exuberance, the utter and complete abandonment of the self to the joy of the moment which the gay, loving daughter of Jephthah brings to the story are a sharp contrast.



Illustration of the Aspirations of Youth

We are concerned here with examining how aspiration functions in the human life situation. Adah, at the beginning of our story is very young — evidently she has just entered into young womanhood. Her aspirations are those of the innocence of youth. She had been reared in the God-loving, God-fearing tradition of a pious and devoted family. Life for her was still a continual joy for her very immaturity had as yet not permitted the complexities of adult decisions to be foisted upon her.

She sought only to serve her God, and to be an obedient and loving child of her earthly parents. For her, the enjoyment of God's world, her devotions to God and the deep affection with which her family had always surrounded her constituted all of life. All of Adah's previous experiences had been designed to develop within her a deep abiding faith in the ultimate goodness of God and in the immutable tightness of His Design for His World. Little did Adah dream as she half-skipped, half-danced down the path in great glee to throw her arms about her long-absent father's neck that she was rushing headlong into her moment of decision.

What direction would Adah's aspirations take? Would she aspire to a willing submission to the Will of God? Or would she deny her obligation to become an instrument in the Hands of Divine Purpose and aspire to the satisfaction of her own self-interest? Perhaps Adah's very youth, her nearness to the age of childhood, the age of trust and confidence, may have buttressed the faith that had been so carefully nurtured within her.

It is interesting to note here that when Jephthah's aspirations were centered in God he could face walking alone into the wilderness and into the midst of criminals and social outcasts, he could march at the head of his army into the massed legions of the foe, but when his aspirations were centered in man he could not face himself and the possibility of the defeat of his plans.

Courage Necessary to Answer Our Own Questions

It is one thing to identify this accent on aspiration which we find in our teachings and quite another to realize what, specifically, this means to us in our separate lives. In a very real way, our teachings illustrate how it is that, as Christians, we are to come to a decision when two conflicting courses of actions are open to us. Really, this means that we need to have a heart to heart talk with ourselves.

It means that maybe we need to ask ourselves some point-blank questions and be of sufficient courage that we do not avoid answering them. And it does take courage to ask, "Is this course of action 'me' centered or God centered? Am I forwarding God's Design or trying to imprint a design of my own?"

If we were sufficiently dedicated, sufficiently strong in our faith, many of the difficult decisions we confront ourselves with daily, hourly, would become no decision at all. If the accent in one's living is aspiration centered in God rather than man, even when "man" is one's self, then courses of action are clear-cut and anguish is a detour we need not travel.

If this is the standard by which we make our decisions, then it will be easy to affirm, "I have opened my mouth to the Lord and I cannot go back."

ELECTA

we can learn from her ability to translate her faith into the outgoing activities of life

Presiding Officers who approach the coming jail season deeply conscious of the chaotic state of world affairs will welcome this final address of the series. The address draws a parallel between the times of Electa and our times today.

This presentation, while dealing with issues which make it particularly appropriate in a period of crisis, is never-the-less one of those all season presentations which may be used conveniently at any time throughout the year. It may be adapted, with a few introductory words, as a dedication or to honor visiting persons.

No matter how brilliant the sun, no matter how slowly the hours of a day wheel by, the eventide is sure to come, and with the eventide there is a new and different kind of pleasure. The daylight hours with their constant invitation to go and do are mercifully followed with an invitation to cease one's activity and give way to the oblivion of rest.

Twenty centuries ago, as the troubled Electa watched the sun sink down and the comforting cool shadows of evening settle all around, she must have welcomed the hours of rest with an overwhelming sense of relief. As the demands of the day at last were through — the care of her home, the ministering to the destitute of body and spirit — Electa must have sat down to reflect upon the problems which perplexed her so constantly.

Early Christians Were Scapegoats of Their Day

At that time, Electa was a member of what we might call a minority group today. This Christian, minority group was plagued with all the evils of what we would call scapegoating today. When things did not go well, the religious majority, the civic and political ruling classes, all attributed whatever circumstances were deemed unfavourable or unfortunate to be the fault of the Christians. If anticipated good fortune was not forthcoming, this was attributed to the evil effect of the Christians.

The Romans governed the land and theirs was a completely authoritarian rule. It could tolerate no divergence in either point of view nor degree of compliance. What was handed down as the law from the seat of authority in Rome was the final and unchangeable law. The head of the government at Rome was the only figure to whom one might legally owe his allegiance.

The Christians were definitely a suspect group. Perhaps it was in the form of a loyalty test that the soldiers demanded that Christians renounce Christ. At least Electa knew that this had been the plan of attack used by the conquerors.

Electa Knew of the Hazards She Faced

Electa also must have known that as she continued her work of teaching and rehabilitation that she was bound to attract the attention of the authorities. As she persisted in this endeavor, she knew that eventually her turn would come and that she would face the decision of denouncing Christ or facing destruction by her tormentors. Before this moment came, Electa wanted to have very clearly in her mind precisely what the consequences of her decision would be.

It does not take much imagination to see that such a situation, far from being merely a regrettable historical fact is very much a factor in twentieth century civilization.

When we read how Electa was thrown into prison for her failure to conform to the doctrines promulgated by the political power, a sinking sick sensation comes over us. Is there really much difference between the prison barbarism to which Electa was subjected and the concentration camps of today? What has happened that for twenty centuries there has been a constant repetition of man's inhumanity to man?

Electa's Story Has Significance Today

If you want to know how the teachings of our Order, so ancient and time honored, have significance in our lives today, read the story of Electa today. Men and nations must pause after their day's activities and reflect upon the decision which is theirs to make. It is precisely that same decision which Electa was forced to make so long ago.

Today we know with a frightening kind of certainty that to renounce our faith, our ideals, our commitment to a continuing regard for the individual, is to place all successive generations under the political domination of a most savage and barbarous political power group. Daily and hourly, our leaders are doing as Electa did. They are refusing to the slightest indication that we would give even tacit assent to the least of their demands.

Electa knew that such a decision on her part was likely to eventually bring about her death. But, Electa had enough faith in God, enough confidence in Christ, and the sure courage of her convictions that she could make an exemplary decision. For her life without faith and belief was not worth living.

What is it that our lesson teaches us? How is it that Christians can make the decisions, can give up all they hold dear here on earth, can willingly forego the sheer joy of living among those they love? What is so powerful about the faith they have? It is quite simply that through the love of God and belief in Christ the Son that life need not end. There is no power on earth sufficiently strong to wrench the promise and hope of life everlasting amidst all the glory of God from the grasp of a true believer.

Steps to Making Clear Decisions

Like Electa, we feel the slow ebb of the demands of the day and in the quiet reflective mood of evening we, too, can think rationally concerning the central problem which the story of Electa brings to us today. It is it seems to me, more a matter of building a sustaining and unshakable belief so that decisions are made with clear precision.

If we examine the story of Electa in this light, I think that we also must take note of the way in which she sustained her faith. Electa was continually in the process of translating the articles

of her faith into the ongoing activities of life. Hers was a doing, participating, growing kind of religious faith. Here, perhaps, is one of the most significant aspects of the story of Electa.

Faith is a process and not a "thing" which one may produce from the hidden recesses of his soul when the occasion calls for it. A faith lived is in a continual process of regenerating itself.

This may seem at first to be saying something in a very mechanical kind of a way. In a way, perhaps this notion is a mechanistic way of saying something which could never in any age except ours have had such a profound impact.

We are all familiar with processes and at first it may seem as if it were not quite appropriate when speaking of the matter of faith. But, if we will just pause a moment to realize that a process controls the relationship between means that are used and ends that are achieved in such a way that the process is continually regenerated, this may indeed be a very precise summary of one of the major contributions of the story of Electa.

These are crucial years in a critical age. If we take the teaching of the fifth point of the Star as seriously as it should be taken, the challenge to build a faith which will consistently control the means which we use to achieve the ends which we desire.

ESTHER

the star point story leading the way to responsible citizenship

The theme of this presentation emphasizes the contributions which our common heritage has made to the development of the fundamentals so necessary to democracy. The address develops the teachings of this story in regard to citizenship and responsible participation. While this address is the third presentation in the series it is highly suitable for use on patriotic occasions as well.

It, too, may be adapted to suit the needs of the presiding officer for dedications, honoring grand officers, etc.

The story of Esther ushers in a new era in many ways. In a way, the story of Esther is the story of rags to riches but it is a great deal more than this. The story deals, also, with a very fundamental problem, "Who should rule the people?"

For long years in the history of man's development, the notion that the ruler was somehow a part of the ruling family, whatever that might have been, dominated the scene. To be sure, the author of this story does not tell us that he wishes to deal with this issue. No, indeed. But let us look at the story again to see if we can see how the story of Esther has implications pertinent to civil government.

Hebrews Wished to Participate in Government

You remember that Esther was really an orphaned Jewess who had been in the care of her uncle, Mordecai. In other words, Esther was one of a conquered and despised people held in captivity in Persia.

Mordecai was evidently one of the most influential of the Hebrews in exile. He seems to have been the spokesman for the group who talked earnestly among themselves in an effort to devise a method whereby they might effect their freedom from bondage. The plan which they devised was really an advanced idea in that day and age. They knew that they must find a way to participate meaningfully in the existing government.

This was an enormously important idea. Previously, those who had found themselves at the mercy of despotic governments had viewed their only hope as lying in the abolition of government. Here we have the important idea that the solution to inadequate government lies in the more adequate participation by those who are governed.

This story illustrates another point which is symbolically illustrated in the story of Esther. It is the idea that the individual selected by a group should be prepared and worthy of the confidence and trust being invested in him. Mordecai, himself, took the responsibility of educating the individual whom they had selected to represent their interests in government. It is highly interesting to note that this story is an important forerunner to the now commonly accepted idea that women as well as men should be educated for their civic responsibilities.

Spiritual Training and Civic Training Necessary

The story of Esther illustrates the necessity for spiritual training and for civic training as well. Mordecai schooled Esther well in the historical and cultural traditions of her people. When he had completed this undertaking, it was necessary for Mordecai to find an opportunity for Esther to learn at first hand the nature of the political situation. Although the idea of sending a young girl to the house of the women from which Ahasuerus selected candidates for the queenship on a trial basis is far afield from what is considered proper today, it did serve the purpose of permitting Esther to learn court protocol and the complicated system of human relationships which constituted the government.

Another interesting facet of this story can be found in the close relationship which Esther maintained with the group she represented. Through Mordecai she received advice and counsel. When her courage wavered, the simple belief of her people that she was made for such times as those gave her new heart and determination.

Sometimes today it is hard to realize just how important the individual person is. It is heartening to read how one slip of a girl could bring about the dissolution of the bonds which had enslaved a whole people for so long. The story of Esther, among many other things, emphasizes the importance and responsibilities of each and every individual.

Finally, the story illustrates how a government in which individuals of high moral character and a sense of dedication can be moved to redress the wrongs which have been grievously committed.

We Foster Civic Responsibility, Not "Partisan Politics"

When an organization such as ours uses materials such as the story of Esther as part of its basic ritualistic teachings, we can see that a true understanding of our work deals with all aspects of human existence. Our organization does not and should not participate in what we call "partisan politics." But, our organization symbolizes its interest in the fostering of civic responsibility and interests in the affairs of our great nation by placing the flag of our country on the floor of the Chapter room before the meeting may be officially begun.

The democratic tradition which we embrace as a way of life has deep historical roots and it is a fascinating process to study our lessons to see how deeply our democratic principles are rooted in the religious tradition which is ours. The story of Esther is a challenge to the individual to be an enlightened and informed citizen, to assume his obligation to participate in the process of governing and to use his influence to see that the government functions in the interests of the governed.

Perhaps you will share with me a sense of constant admiration for timeliness and applicability of the lessons which were written so long ago. Perhaps, too, you will share with me a renewed interest in studying the heritage that is ours in order to gain new insight and understanding of the principles we revere.

Cluster a handful of violets in loving hand
All glitter-circled with friendship's gold,

And sprinkle the ribbon with essence of rose
And fasten the bouquet with greenery to hold
The hope of new spring time, the promise of sun
The soft moist memory of gentled rain
And hasten to carry the fragrant delight
To someone who lives, suffering in pain.
Take with it your heart-felt love and affection
And give of your time with radiant smile
Take time out from living and loving
Help make life for someone dearly worthwhile.

MARTHA

illustrating the essential parts of living by 'modern morality' in Christ's time

This truly all-occasion presentation is one of the highlights of this series. It is an exceedingly thoughtful presentation and designed to interest the most discriminating membership. It is one of those addresses which it is nice to dedicate to an individual who has been worthy of recognition because of his service, cooperation and inspiration.

The address may be used to honor visiting dignitaries, those who have had the privilege of serving at the station of Martha or as an honor to a visiting "past" Martha.

Martha, more than any other of the women of the Bible, embodies the essence of modern morality. Writers and historians often make a point of stating that the truly modern era was ushered in by Galileo and Copernicus. Others assert that there was no modern age until the age of industrial expansion. Even now, there are those who try to build a case for the Atomic Era as the onset of what is truly modern. But, for me, the truly modern morality is to be found in that first century of the Christian era.

How to Bridge the Gap Between Mortality and Immortality

Martha lived in this century and her story with its assurance of proof positive of life eternal envelops the essence of what has been truly a modern morality. In all the centuries which had passed, mankind had essentially been "earth bound." Until the time of Christ, men groped for understanding and comprehension. They could not believe that man's short stay-on earth was all of life. They had faith that at some time in some way they would enter the kingdom of heaven.

But still the major emphasis was on this world, the importance of what was done in the here and now rather than on the world which was yet to come. How one bridged the gap between mortality and immortality perplexed the hearts and minds of men.

Sometimes this very old problem has been called "this worldliness" and "other worldliness." For just a moment, in order to see how the story of Martha brings home a truly modern morality, let us see how things are different if the emphasis is on "this worldliness" instead of "other worldliness." If we have no assurance of life eternal made possible through belief, our vision is limited.

When we have problems, we decide these problems in terms of the right here and now. If a solution to a problem is immediately satisfying, this is a good solution. This is deciding things on the basis of immediate results and satisfactions.

An excellent illustration of the emphasis on "this worldliness" may be found in the fascist ideas which brought such havoc to the world in this our own century. Here the emphasis is on man, man's immediate desires in this world, man's design for life, and man's procedures for getting whatever things he wants.

Man Must Avoid Being Tied to This Earth Alone

The ways of life dominated by "this worldliness" call for brutality and irresponsibility. Man may set the goals, and these goals may be self satisfaction quite irrespective of what this may mean to other individuals. What one gets, what one accomplishes right here on earth — these are the things which are most important. For such as these, there is no Kingdom of Heaven, no world of an eternity beyond where all things are full and complete.

When man looks to himself for direction, when man gets what he wants for the sake of the fulfillment of the moment, then he is bound to this world, tied to the earth and he cannot get beyond himself.

The story of Martha beautifully embodies the concept of other worldliness and has had such an uplifting impact on all of mankind. It is a composite of centuries of belief in the Almightyness of God coupled with proof positive of Life Eternal.

This means that the emphasis is not on this world but rather on the other world, the world to come. Here man looks not to himself for direction but to God to make His Plans known to him. Belief in the word of God and in His Son center the efforts of man in the implementing of God's Plan. The satisfaction of human wants and desires are of secondary importance.

If one must deny himself what he wants for the sake of others' well-being, those whose motive for being and doing is centered in God and the other world beyond the confines of mortal experience, can do this with satisfaction and a sense of pleasure. There is assurance that all things are full and complete in one's eternal life even if one's temporary, earth bound life is something less than replete.

If, however, one lacks this faith and belief, then the moment that one lives is all there is to living. There is nothing beyond this life. Those who embrace this pre-modern morality consistently play the role of degraders of mankind and defilers of God.

Our Lectures Are Important to Us

This, then, is why the story of Martha is really a very complete embodiment of modern morality. We gather together in the quiet and seclusion of our Chapter room to study and closely examine the teachings of our Order so that we may profit from the many wisdoms which are implicit in our lectures. What we say and do and think as we deliberate here together is of vital importance to us as individuals, as citizens of a great democracy and as members of the human race.

As we go forth from our meeting, as we assume our duties and responsibilities, we are faced with trying to make our understanding of modern morality have an impact upon the world in which we live. As a matter of fact, the degree to which we as individuals, as groups and as a unified nation are able to make this morality a vital force in world affairs may well be an indication of our ability to avert atomic annihilation.

If you think that perhaps what an individual does is really not too important, perhaps the use to which individual conduct is put in international affairs will cause some sober reconsideration. As a nation, we are committed to a way of life based upon regard for the individual human being, respect for his rights and concern for his welfare. When our newspapers report the instances when individuals have centered their motives in man, in satisfactions for individual desires for power and comfort at the expense of other individuals, then the incident becomes a powerful tool in the hands of those who seek to hold all of humanity in their power.

Mature Individuals Have Great Influence

Individuals who have internalized modern morality are exceedingly important. When you get right down to the real facts of the case, the leaders of our country are simply individuals whose critical position in our way of life makes their understanding of the morality illustrated by the story of Martha crucially important.

Those of us who are mature individuals cannot afford to regard the influence of our behavior lightly. We would find it very difficult indeed to deny the fact that we influence the immature, our associates and our chance acquaintances and influence them in a very significant fashion.

If, in the course of our study of the work of our Order, we can crystallize the importance of exemplifying these teachings in our own lives, if we can clarify our understanding of the impact which we as individuals have on the course of human affairs, we can indeed, share in the grand venture of making the human, mortal experience a grand prelude to the eternal symphony of the Kingdom of God.

RUTH



showing how to reap the harvest of rewarding friendships

The ever popular theme of the story of Ruth is a sensitively done, significant interpretation of one of the hidden meanings of the second point of the Star. Although it appears as the second address of the series, there is no reason why it could not be featured separately.

A few well-chosen remarks will adapt the presentation as a dedication, to honor a visiting dignitary or for use on the occasion of a visiting delegation or Chapter.

Today, it is a frightening thing to pick up a newspaper or tune in upon a television or radio broadcast. Men, guiding the course of human affairs, are like mountain climbers making their way in perilous ascent up the precipice of an unsealed, uncharted mountain peak. Below them lies a chasm, a burning holocaust into which one misstep will plunge them and with them those fellow climbers who are bound to one another by the chain of circumstance.

Terrible and grim as the consequences of failure in this venture are, the reward to be reaped if men may succeed in governing their affairs with mutual respect based upon a deep, abiding brotherly love is such as to open up for all of humanity an enchanted world in which all of the world's masses may share in the world's plenty.

Sometimes We Feel So Small and Insignificant

In such trying times as these, when we are consumed with our dire need to participate in an adequate solution of the problems now facing us all not only as Americans but as citizens of the world, when we seek earnestly to reap the rewards that will come to all of mankind if we can facilitate the bringing of peace on earth and good will among men, we are sometimes overwhelmed with the scope of the task that faces us. Sometimes we feel small, and insignificant and as if whatever we did would never be noticed or have its effect in the affairs of the world.

This has troubled me on many occasions. I have asked myself many times, "How do the acts of an individual affect the affairs of the world?" Sometimes it has seemed that individual acts of kindness and simple everyday efforts to extend the sphere of brotherly love and friendship were somehow lost in the overwhelming complexity of twentieth century living.

An Example of How the Individual Participates

It was just such thoughts as these that continued to run through my mind the other day. We had arrived early in the downtown section of a neighboring city in order to meet an incoming

train. We parked near the train station and across from the produce market. It was a Saturday morning and when we arrived only a few scattered trucks had arrived. The individual farmers looked small and forlorn in the mammoth building. Carefully they set about arranging and displaying the harvest of their summer's labours. Against the vast emptiness of the huge market, their wares looked paltry and insignificant indeed.

We wandered over to the train station and amused ourselves idly for an hour for there had been a delay in the arrival time of the train. Upon our return from the station, we were entranced with the transformation that had taken place. The huge market had been filled to overflowing with individual farmers who had brought their produce to market. The bounty of their harvests, all many hued, in piles of gold and red and green was a splendid winding riot of color across the market floor. The burnished brown of wrinkled faces, all bronzed from summer sun, the faded blue of denim, stout and strong, moved from aisle to aisle and stall to stall like some grand phrase from a wordless song. And all the human effort and all the diligent care found tribute in that grand harvest where the glory was for all to share.

The Colors of Friendship Are Many

And it seemed to me that the world is really one vast harvest house and each may reap and bring some friend he has made along the way or the cherished memory of a lovely thing. And friendship mounds up in heaps of gold and love all in ribbons of red, and many textured greens weave like a living thread binding the baskets of purity all flower-faced and upturned to the enveloping heaven of blue.

The world is so vast, so hard for humans to comprehend in its totality that it is sometimes hard to see how the individual contribution fits into the Grand Design. Sometimes, at rare moments in an individual's life, his vantage point, his vision, his sense of the wholeness of things, permit him to see a part of the grand, multicolored mosaic of human affairs.

It is at moments like this that the individual can perceive his part in the changing panorama of human affairs more distinctly. From such a vision of the significance of human endeavors, one can value deeply and dearly each act of brotherly love, of friendship and of kindness.

We Must Remember the Importance of the Human Harvest

As I read the story of Ruth, its separate facets take on a deep symbolic meaning for me. As I read the story of the harvesting of the sun-soaked grain, in my imagination I see those earnest reapers garnering each sheaf with care and placing them in mounds of gold across the deep brown field. And I think of Ruth who garnered the love of her fellow man and stored it in a heart of gold and I feel a sense of the importance of the human harvest.

To reap a reward in the field of human affairs one must indeed be a conscientious cultivator. To harvest a friendship one must indeed plant the seed of brotherly love and then nurture its growth along. One must shower it with sincerity and radiate compassion. And when vigorous growth begins, obstacles to its growth must be carefully cleared away. But, the harvest one reaps from mature friendship is boundlessly rewarding.

There is no season in which true friendship does not bring forth fruit and in the grand
concourse of human affairs there is no greater harvest that men or nations can bring.