

Elder John A. Widtsoe, of the Council of the Twelve, was the speaker, his subject being "Hunger In the Midst of Plenty."

ELDER JOHN A. WIDTSOE

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Friends of the Church of the Air:

Our generation of men has secured a tremendous command over surrounding things and forces. Matter and energy have become man's abject servants. His mastery of the physical universe has reached heights beyond the dreams of earlier days. Every thinkable material comfort and help, including the conquest of most diseases, seems within man's reach. Man has become a conquering giant. The utopias of the past, the dreams of ideal places, were trivial in material comforts compared with our present luxurious world.

HUNGER IN THE MIDST OF PLENTY

Yet, in the midst of such plenty there is hunger, a worldwide, gripping hunger—a hunger for simple happiness, culminating in peace. The nature of man is not satisfied with the multiplicity of inventions in our mechanical-scientific age. Fear and unhappiness are becoming the world's masters. The very discoveries that have made possible the world's physical comforts, have, in distorted use, produced unspeakably horrible instruments of destruction. Peace has been replaced by war, bloody and beastly; and, daily, war clouds rise in the horizon. As a result, fear, the chief torturing implement of evil stalks the halls of government, stands at household doors, and tears at every human heart. Tomorrow is no longer a hope; it has become a threat. The world is sick.

It requires neither sage nor "elder statesmen" in church or statecraft to tell us why this condition exists. The marvelous gifts of the day are material only. Such physical bounties do not produce happiness; they only contribute to our ease. Material gifts, used throughout the ages in the hope of satisfying man's hunger, have always been found wanting. If true happiness could be found in material things, humanity's joy should now exceed any ever known.

THE CURE FOR THE WORLD'S DILEMMA

To cure the world's present distemper, we must turn for help to the larger domain, of which the material is but a faint reflection. Out of the unseen world comes a body of laws, the so-called moral laws, among them the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes. These laws are as real and comprehensible as any physical law. If a wire carrying an electric current is placed above a mariner's compass, the needle swings sharply to one side, and remains there. Just so, obedi-

ence to any of the moral laws will determine and hold the actions of the man under that law. The acceptance or rejection of these moral or spiritual laws, higher laws of God, determine in fact the behavior and conduct of every human being. They determine the use a man makes of any gift. It is the misuse of physical laws, in defiance of higher laws, which has brought into being cannons, bombs, torpedoes, and other devices for the destruction of human life. The moral laws, if sincerely and properly used, give power to solve life's problems. Above all else, conformity to them gives men conquest over themselves. They then dare to do right. In short, conformity to the laws that flow from the unseen world where God dwells, their acceptance in spirit and in deed, is the cure for the world's dilemma. True, it is an ancient remedy, but is certain to cure the soul's anxiety.

But, as a nation, and as a world, we are largely ignoring these laws of well-being. We have wandered away from the practices that form the foundation of the happy life. We must not shy away from the knowledge of existing conditions.

HAPPINESS BEGINS WITH HEALTH

For example: Happiness begins with the health of the human body, fashioned in the image of God. Yet our bodies are held, today, perhaps often ignorantly, in utter disregard. Not only are the general laws of health in contempt; but at no other time in our country have nerve-whipping, destructive substances been used by the people so extensively and greatly. For this surrender to unnatural appetites we are paying a terrible price in illness of body and mind. It is not conceivable that whiskey and vodka are reasonable preparations for the wise consideration of matters of state—so urgently needed today.

A LIST OF OUR SINS

The marriage covenant, the basis of a sound society, is flagrantly forgotten. The mounting divorce rate has become a national disgrace. Thereby the very foundations of our nation are undermined. Immorality, with its unspeakable slime of degradation, is reaping its harvest.

The Sabbath day, ordained by God, has been the main and full day of pleasure. In the mad rush for wealth, the nation will not suffer a play-day to be established in the week. Consequently, not only are the churches empty, but men no longer take time to commune with God, an essential requirement of the happy life. We are fast growing into a godless nation.

Likewise, in our greedy love of gold, advantage is taken of our neighbor whenever legally possible. Our own advantage is our main concern. When we give, it is because it helps us. That is not the spirit of honesty. We stand on the verge of becoming a dishonest nation.

We have forgotten the practice of family and private prayer. We have become sufficient unto ourselves, and therefore have loosed the tie that binds us to God. Thereby we are allowing evil to range freely among men, and in horror. We have lost the divine protection and sweet peace and satisfactions that come to a family who engage in daily prayer.

The list of our sins is long—too long for this talk.

RETURN TO THE SPIRITUAL FOLD

We know that to correct these and other evils, to heal our sick world, and to bring happiness to hungry hearts, mankind must return to the spiritual fold, and become worthy citizens of the moral kingdom. But how is it to be done? Churches and other organizations that try to win men to the better way of life have had indifferent success. They have been able to reach only a few.

Can we not hopefully try an old type of missionary endeavor, one which, unfortunately, has fallen into disuse in matters of human welfare? We have tried other ways and failed. Why not try this one?

Let each follower of the moral law, the nation over, accept the duty of being his neighbor's keeper. Let him assume a personal responsibility in this matter of curing a sick world. Let him constitute himself a missionary to neighbors and friends, to teach by example and word of mouth the better way of life, to persuade them that it is the best way.

DETERMINED RIGHTEOUSNESS NEEDED

Under this call to world service, all men of good will—in business and professions, farmers and artisans, in and out of organizations—would set out with courage, emphasis, and steady faith to talk about and teach the eternal plan for human joy, and the stern necessity of victory over self, if the world's sickness is to be cured.

This could be made a mass movement of national and international scope. It would flow and grow from centers, such as the group listening in today. It would be doubly powerful coming out of the hearts of common men. It would be a help to church and other organizations for human good. It would be a mighty deterrent to evil, for Satan, an incarnate coward, flees before determined righteousness. And it would have divine backing.

True, such a campaign would need some sacrifice of time, strength, and money. But the cause is the greatest on earth. Lesser causes are fiercely vocal. Millions of dollars are spent annually to advertise a brand of whiskey or cigarets. Why not shout the way to peace from the housetops? Publicity and repetition need not be confined to the material aspects of life. Our spiritual needs, always battling with evil, have greater rights. It could be made the greatest

campaign for human happiness in the last two thousand years. It would beggar any movement for human good, of any time.

CONSIDERATION OF INDIVIDUAL MAN

Any campaign for righteousness must consider first the individual man. As he is, so the group is. He is the one who, noting current events, is either hopeful or hopeless, who either courageously tries to solve for himself the problems of the day, or thinking there is no escape from impending events, eats, drinks, and is merry. By happy individuals the happy nation is built, as bricks of a color and shape reveal the architect's dream. Mass conversions are like heaps of bricks.

Moreover, we must teach these hungry individuals in our Christian country the doctrines of Christ, as taught by him, and not as conceived and interpreted by men. Christ spoke as man to man, to common men, and they understood him. It often happens that men lose the spirit of a doctrine because they cannot agree on the meaning of well-known words. There is no saving grace in such hair-splitting, no cure of the soul's hunger. It only confuses the ordinary man. We must speak to one another as we offer Christ's words, his lucid teachings, to solve our present crisis, in simple, understandable language.

Besides, the individual man asks for specific directions. Generalizations serve little. When we talk of the moral law, he replies, which one? He asks what in the nation saps our strength? What shall I do, he asks, to be saved from the world's confusion? In answer to such questions we can begin with the issues of the day at home, such as those here mentioned. Acceptance of one law makes it easier to yield to others.

SOLUTION OF WORLDS TROUBLES

There are then two principles of action in solving the world's troubles: Every man must be his brother's keeper; and in his labor must consider individual needs first, group needs last.

We live in a land of plenty in material things. We revel in luxury. Meanwhile, the blood of our children is shed over the earth, for heaven only knows what. We live in a land of spiritual famine. We are hungry for the bread that feeds the spirit. Because of our waywardness, contention, warfare, and other evils rob us of the happiness the Lord would have us enjoy.

However, we must not be hopeless of the future. Repentance and forgiveness are eternal principles. But there is work to do. Each one of us must change his own life. Each one of us must be a converter of others.

May the Lord of heaven help us so to build that there will no longer be hunger in the land—in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.