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Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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Taking Stock, 1917.

"TAKING STOCK"

A New Year's Sermon

012
Dec. 30, 1917

This is the season of the year, when business men prepare to take stock. During the year, the business man has little time to engage in a retrospect, in a survey of his business conditions. In the press of driving needs, in the hard work of business administration, in the duties of buying and selling, the average business man has little time left for a constant balancing of accounts to distinguish whether his business is a growing success or a growing failure, and high business efficiency demands that, at least once a year, a man take stock, at least once a year a man engage in a deliberate and thore study of the actual condition or status of his business.

Now in the business of life, a similar stock-taking ~~is~~ essential. During the year we are too much engaged in the actual business of living to pause and take account of our spiritual assets, of our profit and loss. Driven hard, by the exacting hand of duty, by the rigid discipline of routine life, we have scant leisure time to indulge in retrospection, in a careful evaluation and appraisal of our liabilities and assets, of our profit and our loss, of our aims and ambitions, efforts and achievements, purposes and objects in life, and yet, life efficiency, even ~~an~~ business efficiency, demands that, at least once a year, we take stock, that, before we set sail on a New Year's Journey, we take stock of the resources of our ship, to find out, first of all, where we are going, and, secondly, how true are the charts which are to guide us upon our life journey, how strong are the sails of our will, how tight the hull of our conviction, - in a word - an honest, deliberate, critical appraisal of the actual conditions of our life. Now, it is a pathetic and almost a tragic thing to observe how many men, who are so manifestly successful in business are such tragic failures in the business of life. You know them and I know them and is it not perhaps due to the fact that these manifestly successful business men have failed

to apply the most rudimentary principles of business administration to the administration of the business of life. These very same men, who insist upon a thoro and comprehensive knowledge of the conditions of their business, rarely, if ever, take the trouble to study the conditions of their life. Why they speculate in life as they never would dare to speculate in business. As far as their business is concerned, they are ready to adopt the most advanced theories of business efficiency but as far as life is concerned, they are content to drift, they are content to fumble, stumble and blunder thru it, criminally neglectful of the most elementary principles of life conduct. They take stock periodically of their business, but they seldom ever take stock of the business of life. Now, of course, it is a much easier thing to take stock of your business than it is of your life. Business assets and liabilities are really tangible things. They are easily determined. The eye can see them, the mind can grasp them. They can be reduced to telling and concise figures. You have an infallible gauge at your disposal to determine the success or failure of your business, but in taking stock of your life, you are engaged in a very difficult task indeed. First of all, we do not know what actually is an asset or a liability in life. Can you really tell whether suffering and sorrow are assets or liabilities? Can you tell whether pain is an asset, a profit, or a loss? Are thwarted hopes and unrealized (?) ideals in the debit column of life's ledger or do they, in some miraculous way, become transfigured gain in the credit column of the ledger of your life? What is an asset and what is a liability in life? Then again, can you, can we, determine the degree of profit or loss? Can you, can we, say how much is the loss, when ~~the~~ a love passes out of our life? Can you, can we, determine actually, definitely, how great is the loss, when our faith in a fellow-man is dead, when the divine whisperings of faith, are stilled, when a hope, that was the prop and the mainstay of our life, is

suddenly shattered. Can you say how great is your gain, when the warm love of a friend enters the chambers of the soul? Can you measure or gauge your gain, when the little hands of a child, play upon the heart strings of your life? You cannot, and yet, there is a way of taking stock of life, a way, indefinite, perhaps, but yet a way. You take stock of business in terms of profit and loss, and profit and loss, in terms of dollars and cents. Now you take stock of life in terms of profit and loss and profit and loss in terms of happiness. The happy man is the successful man and the unhappy man is the unsuccessful man. The greater your happiness in life, the greater your success, the less your happiness, the greater your failure. Ah! but you will say - "What is happiness?" How can one tell it? How can one know it? Surely every man seeks happiness, from the prince in the palace, to the pauper in the hut. That is the great obsession in life. Is it not strange that of the myriads of men who seek happiness, so many fail to arrive there? So many gain misery in its place. Is happiness after all, but a tantalizing, fleeting, elusive unreality, sent into the world by the great Aristocles of heaven, to tempt the children of men? Is happiness, after all, merely a ghastly hoax, perpetrated upon the innocent, or, is it after all, a thing, a reality, than which nothing is more common, than which nothing is more obtainable if men and women but know how to look for it and where to find it. What is happiness? Philosophers and Psychologists, from the very earliest days, have debated the nature of happiness. We shall not enter a lengthy discussion of it. For our purpose, it will suffice, clearly to distinguish between happiness and something which goes sometimes, by that name but which is not happiness. I mean pleasure,--pleasure. Pleasure is a momentary feeling or sensation which accompanies an act and lasts so long as the act or the effects of the act last. Pleasure, is a momentary feeling or sensation, incidental to the performance of an act and lasts as long as the act lasts, but happiness is a permanent feeling induced by the perfect harmony of our

life and by the free display and exercise of our highest faculties. Happiness is a permanent feeling, which is induced by the complete and perfect harmony of our lives and by the free exercise of our highest faculties. A man has pleasure in eating when he is hungry but the pleasure is co-extensive with the hunger and passes away with the hunger, but when a man has the infinite ***** to exercise all his faculties, when a man's life is well-rounded, complete, harmonious, then a man has the key to happiness. Now happiness is not a series of pleasures, just as ~~the~~ a symphony is not a series of unrelated notes. Pleasure is not essentially in the make-up of happiness. That is why so many people foolishly endeavor to achieve happiness by increasing the number of pleasures in their lives, by striving to gain wealth so as to make the pleasure more immediate, and yet, the more their pleasures, the greater the ease of achieving pleasure, the less was their happiness. When the heat and enthusiasm of the struggle to achieve pleasure has died down, then comes the cold blast of disillusionment, the dead ashes of misery. Happiness has nothing to do with things. It is a state of mind, an attitude of mind, of soul. Pleasure consists of getting things, of acquiring things, of holding things, happiness rather consists of giving things, in sharing things, in sacrificing, in establishing an infinite number of relationships with our fellowmen, a relationship requiring additional sacrifices, to give and not to take, to share, to throw ourselves into the world, not to try to hug the little world close to our own bosom, to engage in many movements, to affiliate ourselves with everything ~~at~~ that is fine and noble in life. There is the key to a life which makes ultimately for happiness, and your life and my life might be confused in many ways, but you will be on the road to happiness. Happiness does not mean tranquillity. Happiness does not mean "Now I lay me down to sleep". Happiness does not mean a stagnant rest. The highest type of happiness is found in work, in toil, in labor, it is that peace that comes in the midst of the turmoil of life, when the pendulum swings to and fro, there is still one point in the axis that is at rest, that is peaceful and that is the soul that is at rest in the movement.

of life. I venture to say that men today, are unhappy, because they are too one-sided. Not so very long ago, I sat at a banquet table. Two or three hundred business men were gathered around the board. It was a joyous occasion, and yet, accidentally, I lifted my eyes and studied the faces of the people around the banquet table and I venture to say that there was not one face there that had the smile of true happiness and contentment. They were set, they were hard, they did not know how to ~~gauge~~ enjoy. The American business man has lost the gift of enjoying life. He has forgotten actually, how to be happy and why? **Because** he has become so horrificably (?) one-sided, because he has become so thoroly efficient in business, and for business efficiency he has sacrificed life efficiency. Men are no longer men, but business men, men of pigeon holes - a man is so whole-soulledly identified with his job, his duty in life, that he has forgotten that a man is made in the image of God, that man's soul seeks inspiration in many channels of activity and not ~~an~~ one. The American business man is an abnormal human being, he has not the harmony, the poise, the balance, that make for happiness in life. He is too one-sided. I think our eduction is faulty. I think our education must become a bit more humanistic. It is either too classical, too historical, it is either too much of an intellectual curiosity, aiming only in turning out men who are capable and efficient to do a certain job in the world. Now men and women must be taught that above one's business, is the business of life, that your given task or duty, is merely a means and an aim, that what you are called upon, is to make, not a success of your business, but a success of your life, to make of your life, something well-rounded, something complete, something harmonious, something that shall bring the sacredness, the holiness and the sweetness of a happy life. When you take stock, ask yourselves these questions:

Have I, during the past year, sought pleasures or happiness?
Have I given or have I constantly taken? Have I narrowed and confined my life?

Have I driven all the noble passions of which I am capable, into the narrow channels of my business? Have I permitted myself to develop and grow ~~more~~ along many lines? Ask yourselves, am I on the road to happiness or am I on the road to unhappiness, and this year, especially, it is our duty to take stock. You must ask yourself, not only, "Have I given" but you must ask yourself, "Have I given as much as the great demands of life necessitate." I say, without any hesitancy, that any man, who, at the end of the year, finds a surplus of profit, greater than the profit of the past and year/ has not devoted that surplus or does not intend to devote that surplus of profit, plus a great deal more, to our immediate war needs, whatever they may be, - I say that that man is undeserving of his citizenship and of his manhood. This is no time for business men to make good the losses of previous years. At a time, when men are giving their all and all, their very life, this is not the time for business men to hoard and set aside things for the so-called "Rainy day". "Give" Have you given? Take stock now. Also ask yourself this - "What has this war meant to me." I have been the spectator of the greatest drama of the world's history. What has it meant to me? Has it left me cold and unaffected? Has it brot a revolution in my soul? Has it driven all the hypocrisy out of my life? Has it brot greater sympathy and better understanding, more patience into my days? Has it thundered God into my soul. What has this untold misery and suffering of millions of God's children meant to me in this past year or have I merely permitted the great waters of life to pass by me and listened to nothing else, but the little cackle of my own burr. Have I evolved, with the evolving world? Have I grown during the past year, spiritually, mentally, in my sentiments, in my emotions, in my ideals? What has this war meant to me? Take stock, my brother, take stock. Ask yourself, Have you, during the past year, been fair to yourself, just to yourself? Have you been just to your neighbor, have you been charitable? Have you been fair and just to yourself and to

your God-given *****, to your higher self? Have you taught your eyes to see and your ears to hear and your mind to think, or do you still see the things you want to see and hear the things you want to hear and think the thots you want to think. Are you still surrounded by the Chinese wall of conventional doctrines, shutting out the onrushing tides of life from your soul? Are you moving with the world or out of the world? Does a new truth, shock you or thrill you? You see a new revelation and pride of Heaven's work. Have you been just to your self, my brother? Take stock now. Are you following some gleaming light, some ideal that leads you above your self, that casts a halo of glory about everything in your life? Are you following some ideal in life or are you still beating among the underbrush, the stubby growth, the deadwood of life, not having found the highway to happiness? Have you a gleam, a vision, an ideal, which consecrates your efforts in life? Take stock, my brother, take stock! And this is the hour for it. Learn to bring a little more of business efficiency into the conduct of your life. Seek happiness for we are meant to be happy in this world. This world, to my conception, and when I say my conception I mean the Jewish conception, this world is not meant to be a vale of tears, this world is not meant to be a place of trial and tribulation preparatory to a world beyond. You and I are meant to be happy in this world, and yet, we are so foolishly ignorant of the most elementary means of gaining that happiness, that so many of us make ourselves so miserable, so unhappy in life. Pause, my brother, and take stock. See whether in giving to others, in developing yourself, in following some ideal in life, ~~and~~ in working for a well-rounded life, you are ^{not} actually on the road to happiness, or whether, in constantly taking, in paralyzing some of the finest faculties of your life, in following no ideal, you are not on the road to misery. Take stock, my brother, take stock of your life-----Amen.